

The Second Book of the KINGS Commonly Called the Fourth Book of the Kings

[A combined introduction to 1 and 2 Kings is given immediately preceding the comment on 1 Kings.]

CHAPTER 1

1 Moab rebelleth. 2 Ahaziah, sending to Baal-zebub, hath his judgment by Elijah. 5 Elijah twice bringeth fire from heaven upon them whom Ahaziah sent to apprehend him. 13 He pitieth the third captain, and, encouraged by an angel, telleth the king of his death. 17 Jehoram succeedeth Ahaziah.

1. Moab rebelled. The second book of Kings continues the narrative of the reign of Ahaziah of Israel, begun in 1 Kings 22:51. The division between first and second Kings at this point is thus purely arbitrary.

David had reduced Moab to vassalage (2 Sam. 8:2). After that event, Scripture is silent for a time as to the fortunes of Moab. The country probably regained its independence during the troubles that ensued after the death of Solomon. According to the Moabite Stone (see Additional Note on ch. 3) Omri and Ahab oppressed Moab. But the death of Ahab and the sickness of Ahaziah gave Moab the opportunity to revolt. It was common in the ancient Orient for dependencies to revolt upon the death of a king. For a continuation of the narrative concerning Moab see 2 Kings 3:4–27.

2. Ahaziah fell down. The king was probably looking out of a window in one of the upper stories of his palace (see ch. 9:30). Windows in the East are to this day generally closed by lattices of interlaced wood, which open outward; consequently, if they are not securely fastened, one who leans against them may easily fall out.

Baal-zebub. Literally, “lord of flies.” In the ancient Orient fly-gods were worshiped. In the NT, Beelzebub is the prince of demons (Matt. 10:25; 12:24; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15, 18, 19). The majority of the NT Greek manuscripts have the form *Beelzeboul*, meaning “the lord Zebul.” In the Ras Shamrah texts (see Vol. I, p. 128) a form similar to the Greek is found, namely, *zbl bʿl arš*. The mention of this deity in such ancient texts as those of Ras Shamrah shows his great antiquity.

Ekron. The northernmost of the five chief Philistine cities. The god of Ekron was supposed to give information concerning future events, and thus was widely consulted.

3. The angel. This was not the first appearance of an angel to Elijah. On the occasion of the prophet’s flight from Jezebel, the angel of the Lord had appeared to comfort and strengthen the discouraged fugitive (1 Kings 19:5, 7). Now the angel directed him to go and meet the messengers of the ailing king, who, in his extremity, was seeking after the gods of the heathen. A short time later the angel again appeared to Elijah, instructing him to acquiesce in Ahaziah’s request (2 Kings 1:15).

Go to enquire. Ahaziah had, during the reign of his father Ahab, witnessed many of the wonderful works of God. He well knew the ability of God to help, and he also knew that terrible judgments were meted out against transgressors. For him now to turn to a god of Ekron was to deny Jehovah and to invite judgments upon himself.

4. Shalt surely die. Those who turn from the true God to the gods of the heathen, find not life but death. It is God alone who is the author of life, and it is in His power to heal and restore. When Satan, under systems of false religion, promises to heal, it is only to

bring individuals under the control of his cruel will, henceforth to rule them with a power it seems impossible to break.

5. Now turned back. When the messengers returned so quickly from their errand, Ahaziah knew that they could not have completed their journey to Ekron, and he wished to know the reason why.

6. A man. The messengers either failed to recognize Elijah or thought it best not to tell the king who it was that had sent the warning.

Thou sendest to enquire. Ahaziah's sending a delegation to inquire of the god of Ekron was to show open and public contempt for Jehovah. This was an insult to the Majesty of heaven which could not be allowed to go unrebuked. Israel must learn that the gods of the Philistines were powerless to give aid in the hour of extremity, and that Jehovah still sat on His eternal throne.

7. What manner? As soon as the message was delivered, Ahaziah may have known that it could have come only from Elijah, for who else would speak with such certainty and courage? The king was well acquainted with the appearance of the prophet, hence asks for a description to establish the identification.

8. An hairy man. The words probably denote a man with flowing locks, abundant beard, and general profusion of hair, or the reference may be to Elijah's garment of hair.

A girdle of leather. This was a rough garment of skin. The Jews generally wore garments of wool or linen, which were soft and comfortable, but these would not have been suitable to Elijah in the difficult circumstances under which he was forced to live. John the Baptist wore a garment of camel's hair and a leathern girdle (Matt. 3:4), like his forerunner.

9. Captain of fifty. Ahaziah hated but feared the prophet. The message of doom did not bring the king to repentance. He knew that he was a dying man, but he was filled with bitterness and anger, and was determined to send for the prophet to avert, if possible, the threatened judgment. A band of 50 armed men was sent to intimidate the prophet.

10. Fire from heaven. Ahaziah's recourse to threat in an effort to persuade Elijah to retract his pronouncement of doom was foolish. It showed that the king cherished the same attitude as had his father. Ahab had held Elijah accountable for the disastrous drought in Israel (1 Kings 18:17). Now Ahaziah, by the same perverted reasoning, held Elijah responsible for the consequences he knew would be sure to follow upon the prophet's word. Such a highhanded attempt to dictate to the prophet and thus reverse the plans of God could not remain unrebuked. The wrath of God fell upon the company of soldiers. Against the presumption and rebellion of Ahaziah the majesty and the supremacy of God stood revealed. For a NT allusion to this incident, see Luke 9:52-55.

11. Another captain. By the sending of a second 50 Ahaziah displayed his perversity and stubbornness. He had received overwhelming evidence of divine displeasure upon his course, but he was determined to stubbornly pursue his ill-directed purposes.

13. Fell on his knees. The captain of the third 50 humbled himself before God. He approached Elijah on his knees, not as a worshiper but as a suppliant. He knew that if he manifested the same spirit as did the first two captains, he would meet the same fate.

14. Be precious. Instead of commanding Elijah to go to the king, the captain asked for mercy, that his life might be spared. There was no daring contempt of the prophet as had evidently been the case in the first two instances, but a respect and a fear that were accepted by God.

15. Go down. God would not allow His servant to be coerced by the wicked king. Ahaziah had had the evidence of a wonderful display of divine power, but he refused to humble himself before the Most High. He deserved a message of stern rebuke, and Elijah was commissioned to go with the soldiers to deliver that message. Elijah was told not to fear. After bringing down fire from heaven at Carmel, Elijah had allowed himself to succumb to his fears before the wrath of Jezebel. Now he was particularly admonished not to be afraid of the king in spite of these three exhibitions of Ahaziah's wrath.

16. Shalt surely die. The dying monarch was face to face with the prophet he sought to threaten. Yet it was not Elijah but Ahaziah who was now to meet his doom. The king had turned from the God of Israel to a contemptible idol of a Philistine city. Instead of bearing witness to the might of Jehovah and giving glory to His holy name, he had brought the name of the Lord into reproach before heathen enemies of the people of God. Without fear, Elijah made clear to the king the terrible price he must pay for his apostasy.

17. He died. Impenitent to the end, hating God and utterly helpless before His servant, Ahaziah died. As king of Israel at a time when God was ready to manifest Himself in such wonderful ways, Ahaziah had before him an unusual opportunity to lead his people away from the ways of evil into paths of righteousness and peace. But he failed. He went to his death with the message of divine rebuke ringing in his ears. Such is the end of those who resist and defy the Spirit of God.

Jehoram. Or Joram (see note on p. 78), another son of Ahab, apparently named after Jehoram of Judah, the son of Jehoshaphat.

The second year. In ch. 3:1 we are told that he came to the throne in the 18th year of Jehoshaphat. This double dating of Joram's accession in Israel is a matter of note, for it indicates that Jehoram in Judah was reigning before the death of his father, the 18th year of Jehoshaphat being the 2d year of Jehoram's joint reign. Thus evidently Jehoram began his joint reign with his father in Jehoshaphat's 17th year.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-18PK 207-212

1 5T 191

2 CH 457; PK 207; 5T 192

2-45T 191

2, 6 CH 455

3 CT 255; Ev 608; 5T 197; 8T 69

3, 4 AA 290; PK 208

4 5T 195

7-13PK 208

15, 16 PK 209

16 PK 224

17 PK 210

CHAPTER 2

1 *Elijah, taking his leave of Elisha, with his mantle divideth Jordan, 9 and, granting Elisha his request, is taken up by a fiery chariot into heaven. 12 Elisha, dividing Jordan with Elijah's mantle, is acknowledged his successor. 16 The young prophets, hardly obtaining leave to seek Elijah, could not find him. 19 Elisha with salt healeth the unwholesome waters. 23 Bears destroy the children that mocked Elisha.*

1. Take up Elijah. The Lord had given to Elijah a revelation of the fact that he would be taken to heaven, but unknown to him, this fact had also been revealed to Elisha and to the sons of the prophets (see PK 225, 226). The ascension of Elijah took place after Jehoram had begun his reign in Judah (2 Chron. 21:5, 12).

Elijah went with Elisha. Literally, “Elijah and Elisha went.” It was Elisha who was accompanying Elijah. From the time of his call it seems that Elisha was in constant attendance on Elijah, for he “went after Elijah, and ministered unto him” (1 Kings 19:21). The younger prophet was accustomed to perform such daily ministrations for his master as pouring water on his hands (2 Kings 3:11) and doing all such offices of kindly personal ministry as a son might perform for an aged father.

Gilgal. Probably not the Gilgal in the Jordan valley near Jericho, where Israel encamped after crossing the Jordan and where Joshua set up the 12 stones (Joshua 4:19, 20). Commentators have pointed out two difficulties in this designation: (1) the order in which the centers for the three schools are mentioned, Gilgal, Bethel, Jericho (2 Kings 2:1–4; cf. PK 225); (2) the expression “went down” being used to describe the journey from Gilgal to Bethel (2 Kings 2:2). The Hebrew word *yarad*, from which the expression is translated, means to descend and is not the word that would normally be used to describe a journey from Gilgal in the Jordan valley, about 700 ft. (213 m.) below sea level, to Bethel about 3,000 ft. (914.4 m.) above sea level. There was a Gilgal near the oaks of Moreh, near Shechem (see on Gen. 12:6; Deut. 11:30). This has been identified as the village of *Jiljilia*, in southern Samaria, 7 1/4 mi. (11.8 km.) north by west from Bethel, and has been suggested as this Gilgal. Actually *Jiljilia* is on practically the same level as Bethel on the same central ridge of Palestine; but since it is on a high hill and Bethel is not, anyone would probably think of going “down” when he set out for Bethel.

2. Tarry here. Elijah knew that he had come to the end of his earthly career. To Elisha each invitation to tarry and allow his master to go on alone was a test of his purpose and his fidelity. Would he now turn back from the work to which he had been called as Elijah’s successor and go back to the plow, or would he be true to his call as a prophet and continue the work of reformation so nobly and effectively begun by Elijah?

Hath sent me. Before Elijah’s ascension he was to visit once more the schools of the prophets, to warn and strengthen those who were to carry responsibilities in the cause of the Lord. It is not known whether this northern Gilgal or the one near Jericho was the center of false worship denounced by two prophets (Hosea 4:15; 9:15; 12:11; Amos 4:4; 5:5). If the former, then two of these important centers of spiritual training were at places where shrines had been or were to be established to the false worship that had become so strongly entrenched in the land. These two schools were at Gilgal and Bethel (see on v. 1), and a third school was at Jericho. The young men trained at these schools were to carry out in every part of the land the work of instructing the people in the ways of God and combating the influences of idolatry, which had been given such strong support by Ahab and Jezebel. As a result of these earnest and united efforts, powerful influences for good were set in action and the cause of idolatry received a decided check. Israel, which because of its evil seemed ripe for destruction, was saved for a time from the dangers that threatened to bring the nation to ruin.

As the Lord liveth. These earnest words were thrice spoken, at Gilgal, at Bethel (v. 4) and at Jericho (v. 6). They reveal the fixed purpose of Elisha not to forsake his trust, but

to continue to the very end with his master Elijah in the work to which he had been called. The young man had been called by God to follow the older prophet, and to receive from him a training that was to prepare him for the heavy responsibilities he would soon have to carry alone. As long as the opportunity for service remained, Elisha refused to forsake his master.

3. Sons of the prophets. Only a few years before, Elijah had believed he was the only one left in Israel who remained true to God, but he had been given the divine assurance that the Lord had no less than 7,000 in Israel who had not bowed to Baal (1 Kings 19:18). Many of these faithful children of God had united with the schools of the prophets, that they might prepare for a part in the same service of reform to which Elijah and Elisha had been called. These schools had fallen into decay during the apostasy of Israel, but had been reestablished by Elijah (PK 224). Throughout the nation Elijah now found evidences of faith and courage in the Lord, and his heart was cheered at the strong work he saw being carried on in the schools.

Knowest thou? The fact that Elijah was to be translated that day had been revealed not only to the prophet himself but also to Elisha and the sons of the prophets (see on v. 1). When a revelation is given to one individual by God, it is no indication that that same revelation has not also been given to someone else.

From thy head. It was generally recognized that Elijah held the leading position in the Lord's work of reform then being carried on in Israel. The disciples in the schools of the prophets recognized this fact, and so did Elisha. God carries on His work on earth through leaders who are chosen by Him. The true people of God recognize these leaders as men of divine appointment and follow their leadership, without envy or criticism.

Hold ye your peace. Heb. *hecheshu*. This word imitates the sound and thus strikingly conveys the meaning, like our English word, "hush!"

4. To Jericho. If this Gilgal was in southern Samaria (see on v. 1), Elijah and Elisha had journeyed toward the east and south, to Bethel, and now they continued their journey southeast to Jericho, which was 12 1/2 mi. (20 km.) beyond Bethel.

5. Sons of the prophets. Centers of the Lord's work are situated at strategic places. The establishment of a school of the prophets at Jericho was not an accident. Jericho was on an important roadway over which many travelers moved from the regions across the Jordan. At the oasis of Jericho they could stop for rest and refreshment. Here they might come in touch with the disciples at the school of the prophets and receive from them the messages of hope and trust in the Lord which God intended should be carried to all men everywhere.

7. Fifty men. This gives some indication of the size of a school of the prophets. The language of the verse implies that these were not all but only a portion of those in attendance at the Jericho school.

Stood to view. These sons of the prophets knew that Elijah would be taken from them to heaven and that this would be their last view of their beloved leader. So they stood at a vantage point, probably on the abrupt heights behind the town, whence they would have a view of the whole course of the river and of the bank beyond for many miles.

By Jordan. Under the observation of the "fifty men" who had taken their stand at the place selected, Elijah and Elisha reached the Jordan. This was about 5 mi. at the nearest bend, from Jericho.

8. Took his mantle. Elijah's mantle had become the badge of his prophetic office. Rolling up the mantle, he smote the waters of the Jordan as Moses had smitten the river Nile with his rod (Ex. 7:20). The result was a miraculous parting of the Jordan, making a path by which God's servants passed over on dry land. It is an obvious comparison with the dividing of the waters of the Red Sea at the time of the Exodus (Ex. 14:21), and with the stopping of the Jordan at the time of Joshua (Joshua 3:13–17). The same God who by His power had brought Israel out of Egypt and into the Promised Land, was with them still, ready to reveal Himself and His might and His ever-loving care of His people at the hour of need.

9. Ask. As Elijah was about to take leave of his faithful servant and disciple, he gave Elisha the privilege of asking for whatever was in his heart. Elisha might have asked for temporal or material favor—riches, fame, wisdom, worldly honor and glory, a place among the great leaders of earth, or a life of ease and pleasure as contrasted with Elijah's life of hardship and privation. But he asked for none of these. What he wanted most was to carry on the same work that Elijah had carried on, and in the same spirit and power. To do that he would need the same grace and the same help of the Spirit of God.

Double portion. The request of Elisha reminds us of Solomon's petition. He asks for no worldly advantage, position, or gain, but for the spiritual power necessary to discharge aright the solemn responsibilities to which he had been called. By asking for a "double portion" of the spirit of Elijah, Elisha was not asking for double the power of Elijah. He was not asking for more than had been given to the older prophet, nor was he asking for a higher position or more ability than had been given to Elijah. The Hebrew phrase employed is the same as that in Deut. 21:17, denoting the proportion of a father's property that was to be given to the eldest son. So the request of Elisha was only that he might be treated as the eldest son of the departing prophet, and that he might receive a double portion of Elijah's spirit as compared with that which would be given to any others of the sons of the prophets. What he was asking for was an acknowledgment of a spiritual birthright, that he might be regarded as the first-born spiritual son of the elder prophet, and that he might thus be enabled to continue the work begun by Elijah.

10. A hard thing. Not hard for the Lord, but hard for Elijah to grant. It was not for a prophet to name his successor. Only God can choose those who will carry out the prophetic office. Elijah well knew that it was not within his province to nominate the one who was to carry on with the work to which he himself had been called by the Lord. For this reason it was impossible for him, apart from divine inspiration, to say whether or not the request would be granted.

When I am taken. The words, "when I am," are not in the Hebrew and would be best omitted. The meaning is, "if you see me being taken." If Elisha would be a witness of Elijah's translation, then he would know that the Lord had seen fit to grant his request.

11. As they still went on. Literally, "they were walking a walking." That is, they were walking on and on, talking as they went. Whither, we are not told, perhaps toward some height of the mountains in the neighborhood of which Moses was raised from the dead and taken to heaven (see on v. 6).

A chariot of fire. The "chariots of God" were evidently the angels (see Ps. 68:17). The angels are God's messengers, "sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb. 1:14). Heavenly messengers and divine agencies are represented in different forms to human sight and in prophetic vision. Zechariah saw horses of various

colors (Zech. 1:8), declared to be messengers “whom the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth” (Zech. 1:10). He saw horses and chariots (Zech. 6:1–3), interpreted to be the “spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth” (Zech. 6:5). Ezekiel saw “living creatures” described as having the appearance of “burning coals of fire” with their movements compared to flashes of lightning (Eze. 1:13, 14).

Horses and chariots are often used in the Bible as symbols of the might, majesty, and glory with which the Lord annihilates His opponents and protects and saves His own. Habakkuk represents God’s power thus: “Thou didst ride upon thine horses and thy chariots of salvation” (Hab. 3:8). In giving a description of the coming of the Lord Isaiah speaks of His coming “with his chariots like a whirlwind” (Isa. 66:15). When the servant of Elisha was stricken with terror because of the great host of the Syrians with their horses and chariots (15>2 Kings 6:14, 15), Elisha prayed that his eyes might be opened, whereupon the young man saw the mountain “full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha” (2 Kings 6:17).

Elijah was a type of the living saints in the last days who will be translated without seeing death. At the transfiguration, where Peter, John, and James were given a preview of the second coming of Christ in His power and glory (Luke 9:28–32; see DA 421, 422), Elijah appeared as a representative of the saints who will be translated when Jesus comes, and Moses as a representative of the righteous who die and will be raised from their graves to accompany their Saviour to heaven.

By a whirlwind. The terrible power of a storm gives some representation to the mind of man of the awful majesty and power of God. “The Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind” (Job 38:1), giving him a picture of the unsearchable wisdom and power of God (see also Isa. 66:15; Nahum 1:3). Elijah had performed a great work and received a glorious reward. In loneliness and discouragement, under pain and affliction, in the desert or on the mountain heights, Elijah had carried on his difficult task of bearing witness for God at a time when king and people had turned their backs upon Jehovah. But God did not permit His servant to die at the hands of those who sought his life, nor did He permit him to pass from his labors in discouragement or reproach. As Elijah had honored God, so the Lord now honored him, not permitting him to go into the grave, but taking him directly into the glory and peace of heaven.

12. Elisha saw it. Thus was fulfilled the sign given by Elijah (v. 10). Elisha now knew that he was to have the double portion of Elijah’s spirit for which he had asked, and that there was an important work ahead for him.

My father. Elisha regarded the older prophet as a spiritual father. As son and heir, the younger prophet was now to enter upon the responsibilities of the elder. The work Elijah had so nobly begun was henceforth to be carried on by Elisha.

The chariot of Israel. The words were inspired by the awesome manner in which Elijah was taken into heaven, but they express the prophet’s realization of the fact that Israel’s true defense lay not in earthly might, not in armies, horsemen, and chariots, but in the might and power of God. One angel sent by God to guard His children is more than a match for the mightiest armies of earth.

No more. Elisha had seen his master taken into heaven, but once he was gone, Elisha was to see him no more. Not until the resurrection, when all the righteous dead are raised from their graves, will Elisha be permitted to see Elijah again. So it will be with the

disciples who saw Jesus ascend into heaven, and “a cloud received him out of their sight” (Acts 1:9). At His second coming they will once more be permitted to see Him (Acts 1:11). Even though we may be parted from our loved ones for a time and in this present world see them no more, the hour is coming when we will see them again—the happy hour when we shall never part again.

Rent them. The rending of clothes was usually a token of grief and dismay (Num. 14:6; 2 Sam. 13:19; 2 Chron. 34:27; Ezra 9:3; Job 1:20; 2:12). In this instance, however, Elisha’s rending of his garment was probably not so much an indication of his grief as of the fact that henceforth he would need his old garment no more—he would wear the mantle of Elijah (2 Kings 2:13).

13. Mantle of Elijah. The mantle was the insignia of Elijah’s prophetic office. When Elijah first designated Elisha as his successor, he threw his mantle upon him (1 Kings 19:19). Now the mantle was left to Elisha as a bequest from the elder prophet, and as an indication that he must now undertake the responsibilities of leadership which thus far had been carried by Elijah. Returning to the people with this badge of authority, he would be recognized as Elijah’s successor.

Bank of Jordan. The Jordan was both a barrier and an opportunity. To an ordinary individual it was a barrier. To a servant of God it proved an opportunity for the display of the power of God. Elisha stood at the Jordan, but he did not hesitate long.

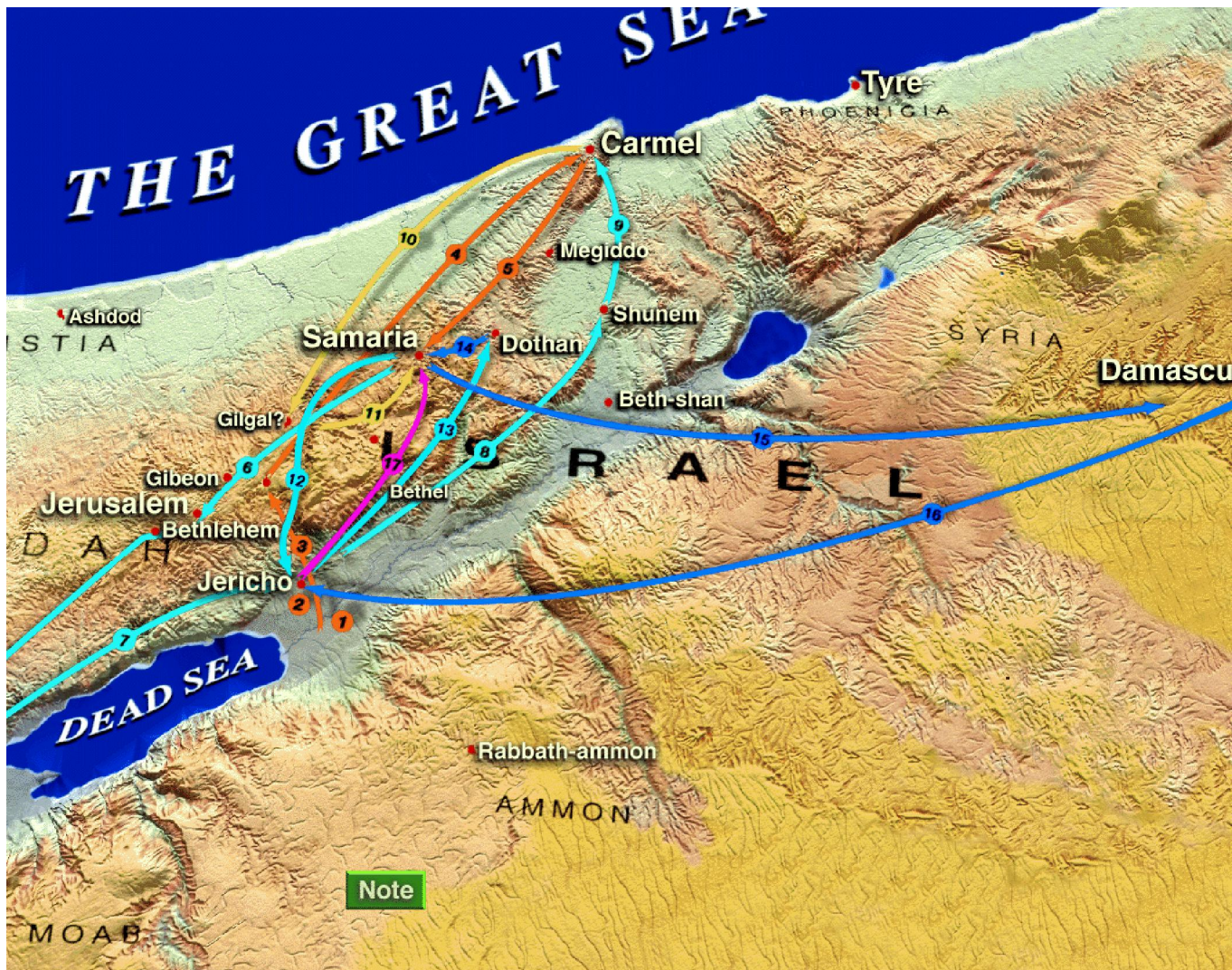
14. Where is the Lord God of Elijah? The question does not seem to have been one of doubt or of imperfect faith. Elisha, by smiting the waters with the mantle of Elijah, had shown himself to be a man of faith and of action. As God’s power had rested upon his predecessor, so now Elisha trusted that it would rest upon him. What God had done for Elijah, Elisha now expected God to do for him. The question was probably in the nature of a prayer and a call upon God to reveal Himself rather than in the nature of a query as to what God would or would not do.

Elisha went over. In faith Elisha had called upon God, and the Lord had honored his faith. God has performed many miracles of grace for those servants of His who have moved forward in faith and in response to the divine call. Difficulties are not barriers but opportunities to men of faith and courage.

15. Saw him. Elisha was being watched. The eyes of the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho were upon him. If he had failed, they would have witnessed his failure. But having succeeded, they were witnesses of his success. The faith of Elisha inspired faith, and his victory led to many victories throughout the length and breadth of the land.

The spirit of Elijah. The miracle of Elijah had been repeated by Elisha and was accepted as proof that what God had done through the older prophet He would do through his successor. When a leader who has carried heavy spiritual responsibilities must rest from his labors, God gives help and strength to another who is chosen as his successor. God’s work is greater than any man. It does not cease when one person terminates his labors, but goes on from victory to victory as successive hands take up the tasks of their predecessors. The same Spirit that had guided and strengthened Elijah was to give wisdom and strength to his successor. Many mighty deeds were to be performed by the young man who had the faith and the courage to follow the footsteps of his master.

Elisha’s Journeys After the Ascension of Elijah



Numbers 6-17 probably do not indicate consecutive journeys, but detached incidents, doubtless with unrecorded travels intervening.

16. Let them go. The sons of the prophets had seen Elijah departing with Elisha and they had witnessed Elisha's return alone, clad in Elijah's mantle. Before that they had had a revelation from the Lord that Elijah would be taken from them. God had probably not revealed to them the exact manner in which Elijah would be taken, and perhaps they had not been permitted to witness all the details of the ascension, at least as clearly as Elisha

¹Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (2 Ki 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

²Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Ge 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

had. But Elisha probably told them what had occurred, and that should have been sufficient. Perhaps they did not understand, and thought that the body of Elijah might have been deposited upon some desolate mountain height or in some lonely valley in the regions across the Jordan.

17. They urged him. The sons of the prophets insisted upon having their way. They kept up their insistence to such lengths that Elisha finally grew weary of refusing their petitions. There are times when persistence is a virtue, but there are also times when it is weakness and folly. It is never wise or right to persist in wrong. When Elisha revealed the facts the young men should have accepted them and been content.

He said, Send. When one is insistent upon having his way, there are times when even a prophet of the Lord, or God Himself, will no longer say No. Not willingly, but reluctantly and against his better judgment, Elisha finally gave his consent. By their own investigation, which Elisha knew would be futile, the sons of the prophets would have the opportunity of learning for themselves the facts in the matter. Far better it would have been to accept those facts as Elisha revealed them.

Found him not. They sought three days, only to discover how wrong they were and how right was the word of Elisha. There are easy ways to knowledge and wisdom, and there are ways that are hard. Often youth learns its lessons only the hard way. It is never the part of wisdom or prudence to refuse the testimony of facts or to go contrary to the counsel of a prophet of God.

18. Did I not say? It must have been a shamefaced group of young men who returned to Elisha with news of the failure of their quest. As far as the record goes, Elisha did not reproach them, but only reminded them of his unheeded advice.

19. Of the city. That is, of Jericho. After the ascension of Elijah, Elisha sojourned for a period at Jericho, where in a fruitful and pleasant oasis one of the schools of the prophets had been established.

Pleasant. Compared with the desolate region round about, the situation of Jericho indeed was pleasant. Here was the Wilderness of Judah, a dry, barren waste, with the sun beating down upon the bare, brown earth. At the time of the entrance into Canaan life-giving springs had preserved a verdant place in a portion of this desolate valley. There were groves of palm trees and figs, aromatic shrubs, and fields of grain. Jericho had been a delightful abode.

The water is naught. The waters of Jericho, once so wholesome and refreshing, had become tainted and corrupt, and as a result the once pleasant valley was becoming unfruitful. It looked as if the curse on Jericho's rebuilder (Joshua 6:26; 1 Kings 16:34) had cursed the land also.

20. Put salt therein. Elisha called for a new vessel that had never before been used, and for salt, by means of which the water was to be made pure and wholesome. Salt was called for probably because it was commonly used as a means of preservation, to prevent rotteness and decay. There was no virtue in the salt itself as a means of restoring the impure spring; it was only a symbol of the purifying, restoring power that proceeds from God, who was to restore the waters to their former life-giving powers.

21. In there. Acting in the name of the Lord, Elisha cast the salt into the spring. By this symbolic action the prophet represented before the people the work that the Lord was to do in the cleansing of the spring. Salt, in order to be effective, must be mingled and closely united with that which it is to preserve. Hence the salt was cast into the spring that

it might penetrate and infuse every part that had become defiled. This illustrates that the believer, who is likened to salt (Matt. 5:13), must come into personal contact with those he desires to reach with the gospel.

I have healed. No doubt was to be left in the minds of the people as to how the waters were healed. This was no magic of man, but the miraculous power of God.

22. *Unto this day.* The restoration then effected was permanent. A spring called '*Ain es-Sultān*', also known as Elisha's Fountain, still supplies abundant water to the area. Through all the years since Elisha's miracle the spring of Jericho has continued to flow, pouring forth its healing and life-sustaining flood, and making that portion of the valley an oasis of delight and beauty. As the Lord in His compassion was willing to heal the spring of Jericho, so He is also willing to heal the hearts and lives of men of their spiritual maladies. As the spring was restored, so could Israel have been restored if the nation had accepted of the ministrations of God's chosen servant. As the waters of Jericho have continued to flow, sending forth life and blessing to the regions about, so from Israel there might have flowed a stream of spiritual life and healing, bringing the peace and blessings of Heaven to all the peoples of earth.

The poison of sin is still at work in the hearts of men. Springs of hate and bitterness are flowing out to the world, when there might be love and gladness. The healing powers of the gospel of Christ are needed everywhere, that they might infuse with new life and power the hearts and lives of men. Into the human soul must come the life of Heaven, that the course of corruption may be stayed. Christ came into the world to sweeten the lives of men and to send forth a life-giving stream of purity, grace, and spiritual power. The heart that is transformed by the love of God becomes a stream of life and gladness, peace and beauty, to the world. Wherever that stream may flow the world becomes a better and a happier place in which to live, an oasis of delight in the midst of a desert of despair and woe. Christ today is the light and life of men, and His blessings flow out to all the peoples of earth from the hearts of those who themselves have been transformed by the touch of His love and grace. God's church is to be to the world a cleansing fountain, revitalizing hearts and restoring hope and righteousness and joy in regions that have lost touch with Heaven.

23. *Unto Beth-el.* Elisha was going back over the way he had taken with Elijah only a short time before. Now the older prophet was gone, but the work he had so nobly begun was still being carried on. The schools of the prophets founded by Samuel and re-established by Elijah after having fallen into a state of decay, continued to function in the training of young men for the work of the Lord. Both Elijah and Elisha saw the importance of these schools in a strong forward movement of the work of God. Without men who were properly trained, the work of reform would be constantly handicapped and little progress could be expected. So Elisha made it his first work to strengthen and encourage these schools, that they might play an effective part in the great work of seeking to establish God's kingdom of righteousness in the hearts of the children of earth.

Mocked him. Elisha was a prophet of peace with a message of peace. His work was to bring life and gladness to the people of Israel. As he was entering upon this important mission, a number of youth came out of the city of Bethel to make sport of him and to deride his work as a messenger of God.

Go up, thou bald head. The ascension of Elijah had been a most solemn event. God had taken His faithful servant to Himself without permitting him to taste of death. The

youth at Bethel had heard of Elijah's translation, and they made this sacred occasion the subject of taunts and jeers. Elijah was gone, and now they set upon Elisha, derisively calling upon him also to make his ascent and depart from their midst. The young men were inspired by Satan, who was seeking to do what he could to counteract the effect of the solemn event that had occurred and that could not but leave a deep impression upon the people of the land. As Elisha was entering upon his work, Satan was seeking to defeat the plans and purposes of God. If the mockery of these young men had been permitted to pass unnoticed, the work that God intended to do through Elisha would have been greatly retarded, and a victory would have been won for the cause of evil. The occasion called for quick and decisive action.

24. *Cursed them.* Elisha was by nature a man of kindness. But there are limits even to kindness in the work of the Lord. The honor of God's name must be upheld, and His solemn deeds must not be made the subject of jest and mockery by the impious rabble. A prophet of God must be held in respect and his authority must be maintained. Firmness, decision, and resolute action are marks of leadership in those whom God calls to carry responsibilities for Him. This was no time for weakness or indecision. Turning upon the crowd of rude, dissolute youth, Elisha, under the inspiration of Heaven, pronounced upon them the curse of God.

Tare forty and two. The judgment that followed came from God. The severity of the punishment was in keeping with the seriousness of the issues at stake. A signal example was greatly needed to check the growth of irreligion and to show the people how awful a thing it is to make sport of the works of God or to hold in contempt the appointed ministers of Heaven. Holy men of God should be treated with reverence and respect, for they are called to work and to speak in the name of the Lord. They are here as representatives of God, and in showing dishonor to them, men show dishonor to God. The Lord holds men accountable for the treatment they accord His chosen ministers. The terrible judgment that befell the taunting youth of Bethel shows how awful it is to scorn holiness or to show disrespect for a messenger of God.

25. *To mount Carmel.* In beginning his work, Elisha seems to have first made a general survey of the land, seeking out those strategic places in which Elijah had labored and where further work might be done. Mt. Carmel held sacred memories. It was there that the notable victory had been won in Elijah's prophetic career. His voice had often been raised in fearless reproof, condemning the wickedness of king and people and calling upon them to turn from evil and walk in the ways of the Lord. That work had not been without effect. Elisha doubtless thought of those stirring days as he visited the scene of this former victory, and he was inspired anew to put all his heart and spirit into the ministry of reconciliation appointed to him. Later in his work Elisha seems to have taken up his residence at Mt. Carmel (ch. 4:23-25).

To Samaria. Samaria was the capital of the northern kingdom, and to this important center Elisha now made his way. He was later to bear witness for Heaven before the leaders of the land. The light that had been given him was for king as well as people, and he boldly entered upon his responsibilities in the most important centers of the nation.

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1-12Ed 151

1-25PK 225-237

2 Ed 59; PK 225, 226

6–9PK 226
6–15Ed 59
9 GW 116
9–11PK 227
10, 11 PK 342
11 Ed 151; EW 162; SR 206
12–15PK 228
19–21PK 230
21 PK 233
22 PK 231
23, 24 EW 248; PK 236; 5T 44

CHAPTER 3

1 *Jehoram's reign.* 4 *Mesha rebelleth.* 6 *Jehoram, with Jehoshaphat, and the king of Edom, being distressed for want of water, by Elisha obtaineth water, and promise of victory.* 21 *The Moabites, deceived by the colour of the water, coming to spoil, are overcome.* 26 *The king of Moab, by sacrificing the king of Edom's son, raiseth the siege.*

1. The eighteenth year. See on ch. 1:17. Since Ahaziah succeeded his father Ahab in the 17th year of Jehoshaphat (1 Kings 22:51), the death of Ahab must have taken place in Jehoshaphat's 17th year. Ahab met his death in battle against the Syrians (1 Kings 22:34–37), a battle in which Jehoshaphat participated with Ahab and his own life was threatened (1 Kings 22:29–33).

2. Not like his father. Ahab, the father of Joram, was one of the most wicked kings of Israel. Concerning some of the evils which he wrought see 1 Kings 16:30–33. Ahaziah, the brother of Joram, also wrought evil and was allowed by the Lord to die because of his devotion to the worship of Baal (2 Kings 1:16, 17). By the time of Joram, however, the reformatory work of Elijah and Elisha was evidently having a marked effect, so that when the evaluation of his far from righteous reign is given, he is said not to have been “like his father.”

He put away. Ahab had established a temple for the worship of Baal in the city of Samaria, and had set up in it an altar for Baal (1 Kings 16:32). He probably had also placed in it an image, or sacred pillar, for Baal, which was now removed by Joram.

4. Sheepmaster. At this time Moab was situated directly east of the lower Jordan and the Dead Sea. The region was fruitful and well watered, and was, in the main, a great grazing country. Even today it is noted for its flocks and its herds. The king of Moab in those ancient times may be compared with a modern Arab sheik, whose wealth is estimated by the size of his flocks and the number of his cattle.

Rendered unto the king of Israel. This OT record of Moab's servitude to Israel in the days of Mesha is corroborated by the Moabite Stone (see Vol. I, pp. 120, 121). That record tells of the oppression of Moab for many years by Omri and Ahab and of Mesha's successful revolt. For a translation of the inscription that appears on the Moabite Stone, see Additional Note at close of chapter.

The payment of tribute in kind was customary in the East at this time. The Assyrians often received tribute in cattle, horses, sheep, and other commodities. Jehoshaphat received as tribute from the Arabians “seven thousand and seven hundred rams, and seven thousand and seven hundred he goats” (2 Chron. 17:11).

5. Moab rebelled. The death of Ahab and the sickness of Ahaziah would be Moab's opportunity for revolt. How successful the revolt was may be judged from the record of the Moabite Stone. Not only did Moab regain its sovereignty, but Israelite towns were taken and many Israelites were put to death. Thus Mesha says of his taking of Nebo from Israel that he "took it and smote all of them, 7,000 men, boys (?), women, girls (?), and maid servants, for I had devoted it to Ashtar-Kemosh" (see pp. 864, 865).

6. The same time. Probably at the very beginning of his reign, and shortly after the revolt of Moab.

Numbered. Rather, "mustered." Joram was determined to bring Moab again to terms.

7. Sent to Jehoshaphat. The close alliance between the two kingdoms still existed. Probably only a year had passed since Jehoshaphat had accompanied Ahab to the attack on Ramoth-gilead. Joram apparently expected the same help in the war with Moab that his father had received in the war with Syria.

I will go. When Jehoshaphat had consented to go with Ahab against the Syrians he was rebuked by the prophet Jehu for giving help to "the ungodly" and loving "them that hate the Lord" (2 Chron. 19:2). But now he again gave his consent to a similar request, this time to go with Joram against the Moabites. The reason for Jehoshaphat's willingness to accompany Joram is not given, but perhaps he was moved by the fact that Joram had shown himself less inclined to follow in the ways of evil than had Ahab his father, and had put away the image of Baal. The two nations were probably still bound by the terms of their previous alliance, for even after the death of Ahab, Jehoshaphat joined with Ahaziah in an enterprise involving the building of ships at Ezion-geber to engage in foreign trade (2 Chron. 20:35–37). Later Joram had the assistance of Jehoshaphat's grandson Ahaziah in another war against Syria (2 Chron. 22:5).

8. Which way? Joram seems to be the questioner. There were two ways in which the kings might proceed for the attack on Moab. One was to cross the Jordan and attack Moab from the north. This would be the more direct approach. But Moab's strongest defenses were on her northern border, which was the most open to enemy attack. Also, if the attack were to be from the north, the allies would lay themselves open to attack from the Syrians at their rear. Another approach would be from the south, around the southern tip of the Dead Sea, through the land of Edom. This would be a longer and more difficult route, but they would strike Moab at a point where she would be more vulnerable to attack, and they would have Edom, which was then associated with Judah (v. 9), as an ally rather than a possible enemy.

Through the wilderness. Apparently it was Jehoshaphat who gave the answer to Joram's question. The way suggested led down through Judea to the southern extremity of the Dead Sea, where they would go through the dry, desert regions of Edom.

9. And the king of Edom. Only a short time before this, "there was then no king in Edom" (1 Kings 22:47), and Jehoshaphat had access through the country of Edom to Ezion-geber on the Gulf of Aqabah (1 Kings 22:48), which was then his seaport, as it had been Solomon's (1 Kings 9:26). The present king of Edom was thus probably a vassal of Judah, appointed by Jehoshaphat.

Fetched a compass. That is, they made a circuitous march. Evidently conditions were such in the wild, desolate region through which they passed that they could not take a direct road toward their destination, but had to go in a roundabout way, looking for the most favorable passage that at the time might offer itself.

Seven days' journey. No information is given as to where this seven days' journey began. From Jerusalem south to Hebron and over the best-watered route would probably be at least 100 mi. (161 km.) to the borders of Moab. But the difficulties of the journey were great, weather conditions were probably against them, and the going evidently was slow. In such an enterprise even the best-laid plans might go awry. Because of the terrain they must traverse, numbers were against them and the very size of the army aggravated their suffering and increased their hardships.

No water. Even under the best conditions water in these southern desert regions was scarce. Undoubtedly they had selected a route that promised the best water supply. But even streams that normally might be expected to flow could go dry in this arid region.

The cattle. They had cattle both for food and as beasts of burden (v. 17). An army headed for a region where cattle could be expected in abundance, as was the case in Moab, would probably not overburden itself by taking along large numbers of cattle for purposes of food. But baggage animals would be necessary.

10. The Lord hath called. Now that the armies found themselves in difficulty, Joram was ready to cast the blame upon the Lord. The enterprise was one of his own planning, one with which the Lord had had very little to do. But having undertaken the campaign, and finding himself in the most difficult straits, Joram endeavored to hold the Lord accountable rather than himself and his associates.

To deliver them. The armies, after a hot, trying march through the desert, had reached a camping place where they expected to find water, but they discovered that the water supply had failed. They were weary, thirsty, and exhausted with the march. Without water they could not go on, nor could their beasts of burden. They were a discouraged, disconsolate group. Ahead of them were the hosts of Moab, by this time probably forewarned, alert and fresh, ready for the attack. To Joram the situation appeared hopeless, and he was ready to charge the Lord with having brought together the armies of three nations to deliver them into the hands of Moab. True faith in God never yields to despair, but Joram had not learned the lessons or the meaning of faith, and he was unacquainted with God. Unbelief has no resources for such hours of difficulty as this, no comfort for the sorrowing, no strength for the discouraged.

11. Jehoshaphat said. Joram looked down, but Jehoshaphat looked up. The king of Israel looked to himself and his weakness, but the king of Judah looked to Jehovah and the strength he knew was available in Him. Joram found fault with God and blamed Him for what he thought was a hopeless disaster. Jehoshaphat looked beyond the difficulties of the present and found comfort and hope in the Lord.

A prophet. Jehoshaphat recognized that here was a situation for which human resources were inadequate. For such a time of extreme peril the voice of a prophet was needed. Only a divine message could provide the counsel and guidance that would now point the way out of this valley of death.

That we may enquire. To every man is given the privilege of prayer and of inquiring personally of the Lord, but God chooses the manner in which the divine answer is given. In His wisdom and providence God has chosen to speak to His people through His messengers the prophets, to provide messages of light and life and hope. To him who will listen to these messages there opens a way of light and gladness. To him who refuses to hearken, there is only darkness, defeat, and despair.

One of the king of Israel's servants. How high or how lowly the position of this servant was we do not know. But we do know that it was he who now gave the word concerning where the man might be found who was so desperately needed at this critical hour. Position mattered little at such a time as this. A prophet was needed, and it was a servant who knew where the prophet could be found. How often in the cause of the Lord it is given to a humble individual to make some suggestion that ultimately leads to the greatest of victories. God works through any man who surrenders himself to do the divine bidding, no matter how lowly the earthly status of such a one may be.

Here is Elisha. It appears that Elisha was somewhere in the vicinity. Joram evidently did not know that the prophet was anywhere around. But the servant knew, and God knew. There is never a crisis with the Lord. God foresaw this situation, and His servant was available so that the necessary light might be given at the very time it was so desperately needed.

Poured water. This interesting detail reveals one of the ministrations Elisha had been accustomed to perform while in attendance upon the elder prophet. Elisha had done well the humble tasks committed to him, and now the Lord placed upon him responsibilities of the highest importance.

The custom of “pouring water on the hands” of someone as a sign of ministration is still prevalent in the Near East today. Water is scarce in most Bible lands, and cannot be squandered. Before a meal is served in a Bedouin tent or in the villages where no municipal water system exists, a servant will place a bowl before his master and the guests. They will take a cake of soap and hold their hands over the bowl. Then a thin stream of water is poured over their hands from a spouted jug or a metal vessel that resembles a teapot. In this way hands are washed before food is taken—without the use of spoons or forks. The one who pours the water is always one who serves, and not the man of honor.

12. The word of the Lord. Elisha's prophetic work seems to have been connected more with the northern kingdom of Israel than with Judah, but the king of Judah knew that Elisha was a prophet of God and that he spoke in the name of the Lord. In God's work national barriers are of little importance. The word of the Lord was with Elisha, for the benefit of the people of Israel, Judah, Edom, and all others who were willing to give ear.

Went down to him. The three kings went to Elisha, instead of calling the prophet to them. One prophet on this occasion was of far greater consequence than three kings. They went to him for the counsel they knew only a true prophet could give.

13. Elisha said. Joram's outward humility did not spare him from a needed rebuke. True, the king had instituted certain measures of reform in Israel, but he still “wrought evil in the sight of the Lord” (v. 2). He had just given expression to his low estimate of Jehovah when he endeavored to place upon Him the blame for a situation that was due to errors in human judgment rather than intentional design on the part of God (see v. 10).

Get thee to the prophets. That is, the prophets of Baal and of Asherah. At the time of Elijah there had been 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the “Asherah,” the latter group drawing their support from Jezebel the queen (1 Kings 18:19). When Ahab began his war against the Syrians for the recovery of Ramoth-gilead, he consulted his 400 court prophets, a group of men who spoke in the name of “the Lord” (1 Kings 22:6, 11), and yet who were in a far different category from the true prophets of Jehovah, recognized by

the king of Judah (1 Kings 22:7, 8). It is true that Joram had engaged in a certain measure of religious reform in his putting away the “image,” or pillar, of Baal that his father had made (2 Kings 3:2), but he was still very far from accepting in full the worship of Jehovah or from understanding God’s true nature and purpose. Elisha therefore publicly rebuked the king of Israel for lack of confidence in the true God and for falsely charging the Lord with a base motive (v. 10).

14. Lord of hosts. A term applied to Jehovah from the time of Samuel (1 Sam. 1:3, 11; 4:4; 15:2; etc.; see Vol. I, p. 173). Elisha designates himself as a servant or ambassador of Jehovah, standing before Him and speaking in His name, as had Elijah (1 Kings 17:1; 18:15).

Presence of Jehoshaphat. Judah’s king was a servant of God, “doing that which was right in the eyes of the Lord” (1 Kings 22:43). It was because Jehoshaphat served the Lord that the Lord had regard for him, and this fact was now publicly acknowledged by Elisha as a prophet of the Lord.

I would not look. This was a sharp rebuke, but timely and necessary. The honor of God was at stake. A wicked king of Israel was endeavoring to place upon the Lord the blame for a disaster that was chargeable directly to the king’s own folly. If Jehoshaphat were not now a participant in this enterprise, Elisha would refuse to intercede in behalf of Israel’s king. The wicked enjoy many blessings because of the presence of righteous servants of the Lord among them, but seldom is this fact recognized or acknowledged by them.

15. A minstrel. Throughout the ages and in all parts of the world, the power of music has been valued for its effects in quieting the spirit and elevating the mind. There are few means more effective for lifting the soul above the things of earth and into the atmosphere of heaven than appropriate music. It has power to quicken thought, banish gloom, promote courage, subdue ruffled spirits, and create an atmosphere of peace, joy, and hope.

Came upon him. God’s people do not realize as they should the value of music to help relieve them from weariness, to drive away the influences of evil angels, or to lift the soul above care, doubt, anger, bitterness, and fear. More singing of sacred songs in the home, the workshop, or the school would draw God’s children closer to one another and nearer to God.

However, it would be a mistake to conclude that prophets customarily resorted to music as a prelude to their prophesying. The fact that a company of prophets in the days of Saul had with them various musical instruments (1 Sam. 10:5) need indicate no more than that music was valued in the days of the prophets and that it was employed by them, as it should be by all children of God, to inspire and elevate the soul and to lift the thoughts to higher and nobler themes. Jesus recognized the value of song (DA 73).

16. Make this valley. God often chooses to work through human agencies, allowing men to do certain things for themselves. The command to dig these ditches was a test of faith, and obedience to the command demonstrated submission to the divine will.

The power of God is able to bring forth streams in the desert and to make the wilderness blossom as a rose. In like manner, when the Spirit of God is allowed to come into the hearts of men, lives that once were barren become fruitful with labors of love. Man, however, has his part to play in preparing the way for the reception of the Spirit of God.

17. *Ye shall not see wind.* The reason why God disposes events in a certain distinct manner may not always be apparent. God could easily have brought up a windstorm and a fall of rain and thus have supplied the needed water. But He chose not to bring water that way. If He had, the Moabites might have concluded that the pools were filled with water and not with blood, and the victory over Moab would not have been gained in that way.

18. *A light thing.* Things that are impossible for man are as nothing for the Lord. The supplying of the water would be regarded by Israel as a miracle sufficiently great in itself. But God would go further and cause the water to supply a double purpose, to save their own lives and to provide the means for the defeat of the enemy.

Into your hand. To Joram it appeared that God would deliver Israel into the hands of Moab, and he had vigorously expressed himself to that effect (see v. 10). Now it would be seen that the reverse was true, that God would deliver Moab into the hands of Israel.

19. *Every fenced city.* The fortified cities of Moab would be no defense against Israel's hosts, but would fall before them.

Shall fell. It is sometimes thought that in this course of action Israel was going contrary to the directions given in Deut. 20:19, 20. But Moses is there dealing with sieges of cities at the time of the conquest, and the reason given for not cutting down the trees is that Israel might eat of their fruit. The provision was prudent in its spirit rather than merciful, for Israel was to occupy the land, and if they cut down the fruit trees they would only be bringing injury upon themselves.

Stop all wells. The stoppage of wells was a common practice in the wars of the ancient East. At the time of Isaac the Philistines stopped the wells that Abraham had dug (Gen. 26:15–18).

With stones. They were to throw so many stones upon the land as to make it unfit for cultivation.

20. *When the meat offering.* This probably has reference only to the hour of the day, when the daily meat (burnt) offering was offered. See 1 Kings 18:29, 36, where the hour is marked by a similar allusion to the Temple service. The morning sacrifice was probably offered about sunrise, at the dawn of day (see Vol. I, p. 698, and on Lev. 16:4).

Way of Edom. How the water came from Edom the record does not reveal, but it does make clear that the water did not spring up from the ground.

21. *The Moabites heard.* The writer here goes back in point of time, telling how the Moabites had gathered themselves together for battle as soon as the word had reached them of the coming of the kings.

All that were able. That is, all the male population who were able to fight, from the youngest to the oldest. It was a general levy of all who were able to carry a sword.

23. *The kings are surely slain.* Friendships among the peoples of Palestine were not always strong and alliances did not endure for long. Confederates of different races might thus fall out among themselves and turn upon one another. In view of the mutual jealousies that existed between Judah, Israel, and Edom, it appeared likely to Moab that the three kings who had come up for the attack on Moab had turned against one another.

Moab, to the spoil. Believing that their enemies had succeeded in destroying one another, the Moabites plunged forward, eager for plunder. They were probably no longer a disciplined army, but a wild, disorderly mob, with only one thought in mind, the stripping of the slain.

24. *Smiting the Moabites.* Unprepared for battle, the Moabites fell an easy prey before their enemies. With little or no resistance, the allied forces surged forward, with the whole land of Moab wide open before them.

25. *Beat down the cities.* The record describes a widespread, humiliating defeat for Moab. Not even the walled cities could stand up against the victorious invaders.

Every man his stone. In preparing land for cultivation, it was necessary first to clear away the stones. The cleared stones were now cast back upon the fields by the invaders, leaving to each individual landholder the difficult task of clearing his field.

Kir-haraseth. Believed to be the same as Kir-haresh (Isa. 16:11) and Kir-heres (Jer. 48:31, 36), and probably also Kir of Moab (Isa. 15:1). Its modern name is *el-Kerak*. This city was the outstanding fortress of Moab, situated at a strategic position on the highland immediately east of the southern part of the Dead Sea, and controlled the trade route to the Red Sea. It was built on the top of a steep hill, surrounded on all sides by a deep and narrow valley, which in turn was completely enclosed by a ring of mountains rising higher than the town. The fortress was regarded as virtually impregnable. At the time of the Crusades it was a place of great importance, the Crusaders making heroic efforts to effect its capture. This fortress is the largest ancient structure of its kind in existence, and is still in use.

Slingers went about it. The slingers evidently found positions on the hills surrounding the town, whence they could throw stones into it.

26. *Too sore.* Even in this great fortress Mesha found the battle against him.

To break through. An attempt was made to break out of the city by a sortie at the place where the king of Edom was stationed, but without success.

27. *Offered him.* The heir apparent was offered as a pagan sacrifice, undoubtedly in an endeavor to appease the national god, Chemosh (Kemosh; see on v. 5). By this sacrifice it was hoped to secure the favor of Chemosh and his aid against the attackers. Human sacrifice was one of the abominations of the Palestinian religions.

Upon the wall. Probably in full view of the besiegers, in the hope of striking terror into their hearts. The Moabites evidently hoped, by this sacrifice, which they felt Chemosh could not resist, to play upon the superstitious fears of the attackers.

Indignation. Heb. *qeseph*. Generally, though not always, used of an act of God (see Num. 1:53; 18:5; Joshua 9:20; 22:20; 1 Chron. 27:24; 2 Chron. 19:10; 24:18; etc.), but hardly to be so understood here, for there is no mention of any specific guilt on the part of Israel. But *qeseph* and its related verb *qasaph* are also employed to indicate human anger (Gen. 40:2; Ex. 16:20; 1 Sam. 29:4; 2 Kings 5:11; Esther 1:12, 18). The exact nature of this indignation against Israel is not described, and the details of the manner in which it operated against them are not revealed. Whether the siege was raised because of increased resistance on the part of the defenders, inspired by the extreme sacrifice on the part of their king, or whether the great indignation made itself felt in some other way, we cannot know with certainty. The LXX reads *metamelos*, “regret.”

They departed. The besiegers relinquished their efforts to take the city, leaving it to the king and its defenders, while they returned to their own lands without having attained their full objective, and yet with the reward of a considerable victory.

ADDITIONAL NOTE ON CHAPTER 3

One of the most important documents relating to the history of Israel is the inscription of King Mesha on the famous Moabite Stone, which dates from the 9th century B.C. For a picture and a brief account of the stone, see Vol. I, pp. 120, 121. Paragraph divisions in the following translation are not in the original inscription but are added for convenience. Words in brackets are inserted to clarify the meaning of the inscription. Ellipses indicate breaks in the inscription where the context yields no clue as to what the reading may have been; words followed by question marks in parentheses are supplied to fill in breaks in the wording as suggested by the context.

The Moabite Stone

“I am Mesha, son of Kemosh [Chemosh], ... king of Moab, the Dibonite. My father reigned over Moab 30 years, and I reigned after my father. And I made this high place for Kemosh in Qorchah ..., for he saved me from all kings and caused me to triumph over all my enemies. Omri, king of Israel, had oppressed Moab many days, for Kemosh was angry with his land. And his son succeeded him, and he also said, ‘I will oppress Moab.’ In my days he spoke thus (?), but I have triumphed over him and over his house, and Israel has perished forever. And Omri had occupied the land of Medeba, and [Israel] dwelt therein his days and half the days of his son, 40 years, but Kemosh dwelt there in my time.

“And I built Baal-meon, and made a reservoir in it, and built Qiryathan [Kiryathaim]. Now the men of Gad had dwelt in the land Aṭaroth from of old, and the king of Israel had built Aṭaroth for them, but I fought against the city, took it, and smote all the people of the city as an intoxication for Kemosh and for Moab. And I brought back from there Orel, its commander, dragging him before Kemosh in Kerioth, and I settled there the men of Sharon and the men of Maharath.

“And Kemosh said to me, ‘Go, take Nebo from Israel,’ and I went by night, and fought against it from the break of dawn until noon, and took it and smote all of them, 7,000 men, boys (?), women, girls (?), and maid servants, for I had devoted it to Ashtar-Kemosh. And I took from there the vessels (?) of YHWH [Yahweh] and dragged them before Kemosh. And the king of Israel had built Yahas, and dwelt therein while he fought against me. But Kemosh drove him out from before me, and (?) I took from Moab 200 men, all chiefs, and placed them against Yahas, and I took it in order to attach it to Dibon.

“I built Qorchah, the wall of the woods, and the wall of the citadel; I also built its gates and built its towers, and built the palace, and made both reservoirs for water inside the city. And there was no cistern inside the city of Qorchah. And I said to all the people, ‘Make for yourselves, each one a cistern in his house.’ And I cut timber for Qorchah with prisoners of Israel.

“I built Aroer and made the highway in the Arnon. I built Beth-bamoth, for it had been destroyed. I built Beser, for it lay in ruins, with (?) 50 men of Dibon, for all Dibon was obedient. And I reigned over (?) 100 towns which I had added to the land. And I built Medeba and Beth-diblathen, and Beth-baal-meon, and I set there the folds (?) for (?) the (?) sheep of the land. And as for Hauronen, there dwelt in it ... But Kemosh said to me, ‘Go down, fight against Hauronen.’ And I went down and (?) took (?) it (?) and Kemosh dwelt (?) in it in my days ... ”

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

CHAPTER 4

1 *Elisha multiplieth the widow's oil.* 8 *He giveth a son to the good Shunammite.* 18 *He raiseth again her dead son.* 38 *At Gilgal he healeth the deadly pottage.* 42 *He satisfieth an hundred men with twenty loaves.*

1. Of the wives. This is an important revelation concerning the nature of the “sons of the prophets.” They were not young, unmarried men, living lives of seclusion in monastic establishments; they were men of the people. They were of the people, lived with the people, and labored for the people. Instead of being interested only in themselves, living together in ascetic communities and seeking there to attain unto holiness, they lived for the good of the nation, seeking not their own material gain but the common good of all about them.

Fear the Lord. This man was a faithful worshiper of Jehovah. The influence of Elijah and Elisha had done much to promote the worship of the true God throughout the kingdom of Israel.

The creditor is come. The law of Moses recognized servitude for debt, not as a “bondservant” but “as an hired servant, and as a sojourner,” and required that the individual thus sold serve only till the year of jubilee (Lev. 25:39–42). In the present instance it would seem that the creditor had not enforced his right over the sons during the lifetime of the debtor, but on his death made claim upon their services, that the obligation of the father might be fulfilled.

2. What shall I do? The question revealed the kindly spirit of the prophet. Elisha was a man who was interested in the people, always friendly, always sympathetic, and always ready to help. When called upon by the king, he was ready to supply the wants of the whole army, when called on by a poor and friendless widow, he did not turn her away.

What hast thou? God uses what we have. He is not limited in His resources or His powers, and could easily have supplied the woman's need without her pot of oil. But He took what she had and placed His blessing upon it. So it is with God's servants today. They may not have much in natural ability or material resources, but if they devote what they have to God and His service, asking for His blessing, the little they have is increased manyfold. Man in his efforts to help the poor would do well to think in terms of helping them to help themselves. The poor should be taught to employ such resources as they themselves possess. Unless this is done, charity may pauperize and do more harm than good.

Save a pot of oil. The pot of oil was not much, but in God's hand and with His blessing it was sufficient to supply all her needs. Our talents may not be many and our measure of worldly wealth may not be large, but God can use and increase whatever is devoted to Him. The pot of oil was the sign of the widow's utmost poverty, but it was also the means employed by the Lord for the supplying of all her needs.

3. Borrow not a few. The widow's response would be the measure of her faith, and also the measure of what she was to receive from the Lord. With little faith she would have received little, with large faith she would receive much.

5. She poured out. The widow did not stumble because of unbelief. She responded immediately to the prophet's instructions, and enlisted also the cooperation of her sons. If the sons were to be saved from lives of servitude, they also had something to do for themselves. Her faith and obedience engendered faith and obedience in her sons. Faith

gives rise to faith, and obedience on the part of one encourages obedience on the part of others.

6. *The oil stayed.* God can no longer give when man is no longer prepared to receive. Not until the last vessel had been filled, did the miraculous supply of oil cease to flow.

7. *Pay thy debt.* The widow received more from the Lord than she had asked for. Her request was only that her sons be delivered from lives of servitude. But in her poverty, she still had many needs. God undertook to supply those needs. He constantly gives to men blessings far greater than they ask for themselves.

8. *Shunem.* A town in the Valley of Jezreel, about 5 mi. (8 km.) north-northwest of Mt. Gilboa, and perhaps 16 mi. (25.6 km.) or more from Mt. Carmel, where Elisha at this time seems to have made his home (v. 25). In his journeys to and fro through the kingdom, Elisha frequently passed through this village, now *Sôlem*.

A great woman. That is, a rich woman (see 1 Sam. 25:2; 2 Sam. 19:32), or one of high rank.

Constrained him. To Elisha was extended the hospitality of this comfortable home. Men of God have the same needs of food and shelter as their fellows, and they appreciate the blessings of Christian fellowship and friendship. Life for a faithful servant of God is often made happy and pleasant by kindly courtesies extended to him by those whom he is here to serve.

10. *A little chamber.* Riches often make the possessor self-centered and forgetful of the needs and desires of others. But this was evidently not the case with this noble woman of Shunem. She was a great woman, but she did not lose the common touch. She lived not for herself alone but strove to make others happy. Having her own needs well provided for, she shared her possessions with others. She had her own household cares and responsibilities, but she did not allow the duties of her home to make her forgetful of the needs and comforts of Elisha and perhaps many others. On his journeys Elisha often looked forward to the pleasant hours of rest and relaxation that would be his when he arrived at the village of Shunem. Kindly hospitality helps to bring among the children of earth a little of the peace and friendship of heaven.

12. *Call this Shunammite.* The Shunammite had been kind to Elisha and he would be kind to her. But what could he do to repay her for the favors she had bestowed on him? She did not need material things. But Elisha wanted to give her some token of his appreciation. A noble heart does not like to receive a favor and make no return.

13. *What is to be done?* The question was a test question, for it would reveal exactly what was in the woman's heart. Had she received the prophet in the name of a prophet, or did she have a secret desire for some reward?

Spoken for to the king. Elisha recognized the fact that he had some influence at the court and with the nation's highest authorities. Might there be some matter in which Elisha could enlist for the woman of Shunem the assistance of the king?

Among mine own people. The answer conveys the idea that she was perfectly contented. She was living at peace with her own people and had no quarrels with neighbors, nor any matters that could not be settled with her friends. It was a peaceful and happy community, and neither the king nor his servants could do anything to make life the happier.

14. *What then is to be done?* To do something for a person who already was perfectly happy and who had all she needed of this world's goods was not easy, but

Elisha persisted in his endeavor to discover something in which he might be of service to her.

She hath no child. Regarded by every Hebrew woman as a distinct misfortune and a reproach (see Gen. 30:23; Deut. 7:13, 14; 1 Sam. 1:6, 7, 11; Ps. 128:3, 4; Luke 1:25).

Her husband is old. Much as she might desire a child, she believed there was no longer any hope, for her husband was old.

15. In the door. Perhaps from modesty and good manners, for it might not have been proper for her to have entered into Elisha's chamber.

16. Thou shalt embrace a son. What is impossible with men is not impossible with God. If she desired a son, God could make that possible for her. Elisha's promise to her of a son within the year was far beyond her fondest hopes.

Do not lie. Do not deceive me by setting before me hopes that cannot be realized. Compare the incredulity of Abraham (Gen. 17:17), of Sarah (Gen. 18:12), and of Zacharias (Luke 1:20), when promised a child.

17. At that season. A true prophet of the Lord does not make false predictions in the name of the Lord. As Elisha had promised, so it came to pass.

19. My head. Probably a case of sunstroke. Reaping was a strenuous task, carried on at the hottest season of the year.

20. Then died. Sorrow and joy, tears and laughter, life and death, are not far apart in the sojourn of mortal man in this world of sin. The son of the Shunammite had brought gladness into the home, but he was also the means of bringing anguish of heart. He had been given to the Shunammite by the Lord, but now death claimed him as it own.

22. Send me. It was the busy harvest season, and all the men and animals of this large establishment were in the field. But she asked for the immediate use of one of the animals and its driver.

To the man of God. As a dutiful wife, the woman informed her husband of the journey she proposed to make and of the fact that she planned on an early return, but she did not explain the reason for her trip. Perhaps if she had informed him of her intention to call the prophet to raise her son, who was already dead, he might have deemed the journey useless and might have made an endeavor to dissuade her from her purpose. The matter was one of faith, and she seemed to keep it strictly between herself and God.

23. Neither new moon, nor sabbath. Both were holy days, occasions for offerings and solemn assemblies (2 Chron. 2:4; Isa. 1:13; Hosea 2:11; Amos 8:5). Evidently on such days it must have been customary for the people to assemble for purposes of worship or religious instruction and edification. If it had been either the new moon or the Sabbath, the woman's journey to the prophet would not have been looked upon as strange, but as it was, the husband could not understand her purpose.

It shall be well. Literally, "peace." The answer was one of faith and of hope. The child was dead, but she did not give way to grief or despair. If the man of God could intercede with God to provide the child in the first place, he could also have power with God to restore the child. However difficult a matter may be, when we commit a thing into the hands of God, we may have perfect assurance that it will be well. The answer may not always be exactly what we desire, but we can have peace, and bow humbly and submissively to His will.

24. Slack not. She pressed the servant to go on with all possible speed, whatever the inconvenience might be to her. The ride would be about 16 mi. and would not be easy,

but she had only one thought, and that was to reach Elisha at the earliest possible moment.

25. *Saw her.* The home of the prophet was probably on an eminence, whence it commanded a view of a large part of the valley below. Elisha saw the woman in the distance and recognized her.

26. *Meet her.* Elisha knew immediately that something was wrong, and without waiting for her to approach him, sent his servant to meet her, to ascertain if possible the reason for her coming.

It is well. Again her answer was, literally, "Peace." The burden of her heart would be revealed only to the prophet, not to his servant.

27. *By the feet.* The Bible records numerous instances of similar conduct on the occasion of importunate requests (Matt. 18:29; Mark 7:25; Luke 8:41; John 11:32; etc.).

To thrust her away. The unfeeling servant failed to grasp the situation, and endeavored roughly to brush her aside.

Her soul is vexed. Elisha saw at once that some uncontrollable grief had filled the woman's soul, and his heart went out to her in tender sympathy. The true child of God whose heart is filled with love and sympathy will be moved with compassion toward all who are heavy laden, and, like his Master, he will endeavor to give them rest. True love is tender and kind, and responds to the appeal of those who find themselves in need.

Hid it from me. At times the Lord saw fit to reveal to His servant the circumstances of a particular person, but not always. No prophet is in possession of all knowledge. Revelations are made only in accordance with God's will. The fact that a prophet does not know all the facts connected with a particular matter is no evidence that he is not a true prophet of the Lord. Prophets also are men, and their knowledge and judgment, like that of other men, are limited. Only when God gives to them special revelations and wisdom do their words possess unique authority. The idea that in such instances as this a prophet should be in possession of all the facts is unwarranted.

28. *Did I desire a son?* The woman is not so much reproaching the prophet as pouring out the bitter grief of her soul. She did not ask for this child in the first place; he was the result of the prophet's promise. But that child thus given, now has been taken from her. She does not say this in so many words; she does not need to, for Elisha now understands fully the meaning of her grief. Her words reveal the bitterness of her sorrow. She knows only that this son, whom she did not demand, is gone and that her grief is infinitely greater than if she had never been permitted to know his love.

29. *Gird up thy loins.* Elisha knew that the woman was exhausted with her hurried journey, and that the way back would be all the more difficult and trying. He did not shun the journey himself, but as soon as he knew that the child was dead, he dispatched his servant with instructions as to his course of action.

Take my staff. The staff was the badge of Elisha's prophetic office, and like Moses' rod (Ex. 4:17; Ex. 17:5, 9; Num. 20:8, 9), was the symbol of the power of God wherewith he would perform miracles in the name of the Lord.

Salute him not. Not that the servant should be brusque or discourteous, but that he was to lose no time on the way. Salutations in the East are long and ceremonious, and politeness takes time.

30. *I will not leave thee.* The woman had more faith in Elisha than in his servant. She knew the power of Elisha's prayers and ministry, and she placed full confidence in him.

The Lord could have restored the child with only a word of request spoken by Elisha. He could have chosen to regard the prophet's staff and the servant, and thus bring the child back to life. But the grief-stricken woman looked to Elisha as the messenger through whom the Lord would display His power, and the Lord saw fit to honor her faith and to deal with her in accord with her soul's desire.

31. *Neither voice, nor hearing.* These words imply that Gehazi had expected God to honor the placing of Elisha's staff upon the lad. Why life was not restored we are not told. Perhaps if the woman had had faith that the Lord would answer her through the agency of Elisha's staff and his servant Gehazi, the answer would have come that way. Or perhaps there was some weakness in the life of Gehazi that prevented the Lord from using him as a channel for the performance of His wonderful deeds of power. It is not given man to know the reasons why the Lord does or does not choose to work in certain ways.

Is not awaked. This does not mean that the child was only asleep, because the lad had died at noon on his mother's knee (v. 20), and in v. 32 he is pronounced dead. Death in the Bible is looked upon as a sleep (Deut. 31:16; 1 Kings 2:10; Dan. 12:2; John 11:11–14; Acts 13:36).

33. *Prayed.* It was through the earnest prayer of faith that “women received their dead raised to life again” (Heb. 11:35).

34. *Lay upon the child.* The reason is not given for the means employed by Elisha in bringing the child back to life. He may have been divinely instructed by the Lord to employ this means, or he may have imitated the act of Elijah (1 Kings 17:21). Prayer does not exclude the use of other means. The body of the prophet may actually have communicated warmth to the body of the dead child, but it was not this that restored the child to life. It was through Christ, who first gave life, that the lad was brought back from the dead. This was a miracle, an act that could be performed only by God. As the Lord restored this dead child to life again, even so, at the second advent, will He raise all His faithful children who now sleep in their graves (Isa. 26:19; John 5:28, 29; 1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess. 4:16; Rev. 1:18).

36. *Take up thy son.* When the child had been brought back to life, the mother was called in and told to take up her son. When Elijah raised the widow's son from death, he delivered him unto his mother (1 Kings 17:23), and likewise Jesus, when He raised the son of the widow of Nain, gave him to his mother again (Luke 7:15). The heart of Jesus goes out to every mother who weeps over the loss of a child, and in the glad resurrection day, children who now are asleep in their graves will be brought back to life once more, to be carried by angels and placed in their mothers' arms (GC 645).

37. *Bowed herself.* The words of the mother are not given. Her thanksgiving was too great for words. In deep gratefulness she threw herself at the prophet's feet, pouring out, doubtless in tears of joy, the thanks of a mother's heart at having her dead child restored to life again. The faith she displayed in God and His prophet was not without avail.

38. *To Gilgal.* See on ch. 2:1. Elijah had done much in building up the work of the Lord by the interest he displayed in these important centers of training where young men could receive a preparation for a life of ministry to their fellow men. Elisha continued his interest in these schools. Often he visited them to give necessary encouragement and counsel.

There was a dearth. Dearth was common in ancient Palestine, and brought much suffering and often death (see on Gen. 12:10).

Sitting before him. The occasion was probably one of spiritual instruction. As Mary sat at the feet of Jesus, so these young men sat before Elisha and learned from him lessons of God. These would be regarded as precious hours, and the Holy Spirit would be present, bringing to the minds of the youth lessons of faith and confidence in God. They learned to appreciate the things of the Spirit more than their daily food.

Set on the great pot. Spiritual food is important, but the body also needs to be fed. Elisha was probably touched as he saw in the lean forms of the students the effects of the famine that was wasting the land. Interested in their spiritual welfare, he also took an interest in their temporal needs. Orders were given that the great pot should be set, so that all might be fed.

39. Into the field. The schools of the prophets were probably all situated in rural communities, where the students would have the opportunity to raise their own food and to receive a training in agricultural pursuits (see PP 593; PK 230) Because of the scarcity of food, the students in the prophetic schools were evidently forced to go out in the fields to forage.

Wild vine. The exact type of plant here mentioned has not been positively identified. Some have taken it to refer to a kind of wild cucumber or gourd, having the form of an egg and possessing a bitter taste. When eaten it causes pain and violent purging. The young men may have taken these wild cucumbers for ordinary ones, which were highly prized as food (Num. 11:5) In Palestine is also found a creeping plant known as the colocynth, with small leaves of a light-green color and fruit resembling melons, the effects of which can be fatal. The LXX and the Vulgate take it to be the colocynth.

Knew them not. The fact that a man is a prophet does not give him all knowledge, nor excuse him from exercising every care and precaution. This young man, not knowing the nature of the herbs before him, gathered poison and endangered the lives of all who partook of the fruits of his labors.

40. There is death. Probably the bitter taste immediately revealed the fact that the food was poisonous. It may have been mixed in the pot with other herbs that were perfectly wholesome, but the gourds spread their poison through the entire pot. Sin is the poison of death. Its influence spreads. In a thousand different forms it is daily set before us to bring us suffering and woe. The only course of safety is to put away sin and error of every kind, wherever it may be found. Otherwise the result inevitably will be death.

41. Bring meal. Whether the meal was a natural antidote for the poisonous herbs is not revealed. It may have had the same significance as had the salt that was thrown into the defiled waters of Jericho (ch. 2:20–22) The meal was wholesome, a source of life and health to those who partook of it. In the hand of the prophet it became a symbol of life which counteracted the evil effects of the seeds of death. Here is a spiritual lesson. The gospel of Christ is the bread of life to those under the condemnation of death. No matter how long or how much the sinner has partaken of the evil fruit of death, there is power in the gospel to heal and restore. All the evil that sin has wrought the Holy Spirit has power to undo. God has the antidote to every form of evil. Christ is the source of life eternal for every man who has the will to live (John 6:27, 33, 35).

42. Baal-shalisha. There is insufficient information to positively locate this town. It may be the same as the district of Shalisha (see on 1 Sam. 9:14).

Of the firstfruits. According to the law of Moses, all first fruits of the harvest were to be offered to God, and were to be given to the priests (Num. 18:12, 13; Deut. 18:4). In this instance a certain faithful worshipper of Jehovah brought his first fruits to Elisha, “the man of God.” The Levitical priests had long before this withdrawn from the northern kingdom (2 Chron. 11:13, 14), and some of the pious in Israel probably recognized in the prophets the representatives of Jehovah to whom they might bring the offerings required by the law to be given to the priests.

Of barley. Barley was usually used in Palestine as feed for animals, but at times was made into cakes or loaves (Judges 7:13; John 6:9) and eaten by the people, although it was regarded as secondary to wheat.

Ears of corn. Heb. *karmel*, “fruit.” Grain or probably any similar garden product. The Hebrew word translated “husk,” and in the margin, “scrip” or “garment,” does not occur elsewhere in Scripture. Its meaning is uncertain. Some suggest “sack” or “bag.”

Give unto the people. It was a time of need, even with the prophet and those with him. The people were hungry and in need of food. Elisha could have thought of himself and of his own interests, but instead he thought of those of the people. So Jesus, when with His disciples in a desert place, “saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them” (Matt. 14:14). When evening came, the disciples wished to send them away, that they might find food for themselves, but the words of Jesus were, “They need not depart; give ye them to eat” (Matt. 14:16). God still speaks to His children today as they look upon the weary and needy multitudes of earth, “Give the people, that they may eat.”

43. Servitor. Heb. *meshareth*, a servant, but generally of a higher order than is signified by *‘ebed*, the common word for “servant.” Thus Joshua is called the *meshareth* of Moses (Ex. 24:13), and the angels are called *mesharethim*, “ministers” (Ps. 104:4).

The servant looked upon the first fruits with the eyes of man, but Elisha looked upon that same gift of food with the eyes of faith and of God. To the servitor the command of the prophet seemed almost foolish and impossible of accomplishment. What would 20 small barley cakes and a bit of grain do to satisfy the hunger of 100 men? Of a similar spirit was the question of Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, when Jesus was about to feed the multitude with the 5 barley loaves and 2 small fishes, “What are they among so many?” (John 6:9). Multitudes still go hungry today because of the lack of faith on the part of those who think of themselves as children of God.

44. According to. Elisha spoke by inspiration. A prophet speaking in the name of the Lord always speaks the words of God. There is infinite power with God. His resources can supply the needs of all. The touch of His hand can cause the most meager supply to increase. It was the power of God that caused those few loaves to increase till all present had had enough to satisfy their needs. The unknown farmer brought his gift of first fruits to Elisha as an offering to God. The Lord accepted that gift and placed His blessing upon it.

So, likewise, does the Lord accept and bless our gifts today. Wherever there is a work to do, God’s children are not to look to themselves and their own insufficiencies, but to God and His boundless supplies for all. What they hold in their hands may seem entirely inadequate to satisfy the wants of those who are in need; but with the blessing of God it may prove more than sufficient.

Heaven is closer to earth than many believe. God is always interested in His needy children of earth, and He stands ready at all times to supply their wants. There is no land or people on earth where the power of God is not constantly in operation supplying the wants of those in need. Every producing garden and field bears witness to the miracle-working power of God and His boundless love. God is always at work, looking after the interests of the frail children of earth. The manifestations of His love and power may not be seen today in so marked a manner as they were in the days of Elisha, but if our eyes only could be opened, we would recognize much more clearly and much more often than we do that God still is present and that He still is dealing in love and mercy with the needy children of earth. God's faithful children may still bring their gifts to the Lord, and with His power and blessing, their meager supplies may be multiplied manyfold to supply the temporal and spiritual needs of the multitudes of earth. What the world needs today is much more of the faith and spiritual insight, the courage and compassion, the strength and spirit, of the prophet Elisha.

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1-44PK 235-243
8-10, 14-17PK 237
18-22, 25-31PK 238
32-37PK 239
38-41PK 240
39, 40 Ev 127
42-44PK 241; 6T 466
43 PK 243

CHAPTER 5

1 *Naaman, by the report of a captive maid is sent to Samaria to be cured of his leprosy. 8 Elisha, sending him to Jordan, cureth him. 15 He refusing Naaman's gifts granteth him some of the earth. 20 Gehazi, abusing his master's name unto Naaman, is smitten with leprosy.*

1. Naaman. Syria was often at war with Israel, but this was evidently a period of peace. Only a short time before, Ahab had been slain in battle against Benhadad (1 Kings 22:34-37). The name of the king of Israel is not given, but the events are believed to have taken place in the reign of Joram, Ahab's son. The narrative reveals the changing fortunes of the nations, and gives an interesting picture of the international relationships and customs of the times.

A mighty man. Naaman was an important personage in Syria. He had gained honor and fame by the victories he had helped Syria achieve, but he had the misfortune of being a leper. However, he retained his position as commander of the Syrian hosts, although he must have been seriously handicapped by the terrible disease with which he was afflicted.

2. By companies. There were frequent border raids conducted by marauding bands, usually carried on for purposes of plunder.

Brought away captive. War is cruel. The little girl had been carried away from her home, and was now in an enemy land, seemingly forsaken by God and without comfort or hope. Life seemed to have for her little of good, and she might have become bitter and morose if she had allowed herself to center her thoughts upon herself and her unhappy plight. But even in an alien land God had a service for her to perform.

Waited on Naaman's wife. The captive maid was living the life of a slave, forced to serve in the home of the commander of the armies that had laid Israel low. But she must have been faithful in her service, for otherwise she would not have been employed in the home of an important official.

3. With the prophet. Although a captive, the maid did not forget her homeland or her God. Nor did she think thoughts of ill toward those who had taken her captive and forced her into an involuntary servitude. Filled with love toward her God, her heart went out in sympathy to her ailing master and his wife. Instead of wishing Naaman ill because of the misfortunes that had been brought upon her, she wished him well and hoped for his recovery from his terrible disease. Remembering the marvelous works of Elisha in her homeland, she had faith that the prophet could heal Naaman of his leprosy. What God had wrought through His servant in Israel, she believed He could also perform toward those of an alien race.

He would recover him. Leprosy was regarded as an incurable disease. But the Hebrew maid had been taught by her parents that there is nothing impossible with God. The parents had discharged their responsibility well, and the result was this wonderful testimony in behalf of Israel's God in a land that knew Him not. Naaman learned of a power beyond the power of men because a faithful father and mother in Israel had brought up their child to love and trust the Lord.

One went in. That is, Naaman went to his lord the king of Syria and related to him the words of the captive maid. Little did the girl understand the import of her words of faith in God. Naaman believed because the girl believed, and he carried her testimony before Syria's king. Thus was Benhadad to learn that Israel's God was a God of power and a God of love. He had defeated the armies of Israel in battle, and he might have been led to believe that the gods of Syria were mightier than Jehovah. But he was to learn that the God of Israel could do that which was beyond the power of men and beyond the power of the Syrian gods. The greatest testimony that can be borne in behalf of the God of heaven is the testimony of a person whose life reflects implicit confidence in Him.

5. I will send. Not only had the young maiden's testimony of faith created confidence in the commander of the Syrian hosts, but it also created a measure of faith in the heart of Syria's king. Faith begets faith and love begets love. Faith is an ever-widening circle that goes out from heart to heart and from land to land, until it encompasses the globe. Only eternity can measure the results of that testimony of confidence in Israel's God borne by the captive maid before her mistress in an alien land. Kings dealt with kings, and in offering his services to Naaman, Benhadad thought to make his contact through Israel's king rather than deal directly with Elisha. The writing of letters was a common procedure in those days, many copies of such letters having come down to the present time.

Ten talents of silver. Naaman was not asking for healing without being willing to pay. Not being acquainted with Israel's prophet and Israel's God, he brought with him sufficient treasure to make possible for the prophet a handsome reward. Little did he realize that the Lord would be willing to heal him, and wished neither silver nor gold in return. Little did he know that Elisha served God and his fellows, not from a spirit of wordly gain, but for the good that he might be able to do. In those days money was not coined, and bars or rings of gold and silver went by weight. A talent of silver was equivalent to about 75 lb. avoirdupois, or 34.8 kg. There were not 6,000 individual pieces of gold, but gold to the weight of 6,000 shekels, or 2 talents of gold. Such a weight of

gold today would be worth about \$55,272 in terms of the light shekel. It should be noted that these computations show only the worth of these metals today and give no idea of the buying power of this money in ancient times. The fact that Naaman brought with him such a large amount of treasure was an indication of the seriousness of the plight he knew himself to be in and of the intensity of his desire to be healed.

6. Recover him. The king of Syria evidently thought that the prophet who was reputed to accomplish such miracles, was a member of a religious order under the control of the state and at the command of the king.

7. Am I God? Leprosy was regarded as a living death. The king of Israel realized that this was a disease that only God could cure, and it was beyond his faith in God to believe that man could be used as an instrument in the hands of the Lord to restore anyone stricken with such a disease as this.

Seeketh a quarrel. Instead of seeing in the request of Benhadad an opportunity for the revelation of the wonderful power of God, the king of Israel looked only at the darker side of the picture. Certainly, he thought, the letter from the Syrian king could not have been written in good faith, but was only a pretext for seeking a quarrel against him. He probably imagined that Benhadad had intentionally sent a request with which it was impossible to comply, in order that he might use it as an occasion for war. Rather than to think of the Lord or His prophet Elisha, Joram thought only of himself, and his utter inability to deal with the situation (see on v. 1).

8. The man of God. How the news of the arrival of Naaman at Joram's court reached Elisha we are not told. But God was directing events so as to reward the faith of the Syrian captain.

Wherefore? What Joram looked upon as a catastrophe, Elisha regarded as an opportunity. What the king of Israel could not accomplish, the prophet would be happy to undertake with the help of the Lord. While the king was filled with despair, the prophet looked upward with hope. In hours of difficulty and perplexity it pays to remember that there is a God in heaven who looks down in love and mercy upon the frail children of earth.

Let him come now to me. Joram feared, but Elisha welcomed the visit of the commander of Syria's hosts. The king had for Naaman no message of cheer and no word of hope. But Elisha asked that he come to him in order to find healing of body and restoration of soul. The prophet was anxious that Naaman become acquainted with the love and power of Israel's God, and that he take back to his own people a message of comfort concerning the hope that all might have in Him. The home of every child of God should be a haven of rest to all who are in need.

9. With his horses. The attendants of Naaman rode on horses, but Naaman himself rode in a chariot.

House of Elisha. Doubtless a humble abode. This was not the palace of a king, but in this home Naaman was to find something that the king's palace could not offer. The humble cottage gate was to Naaman a door to life and hope.

10. Wash in Jordan. These directions to Naaman bring to mind the command of Jesus to the blind man, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (John 9:7). In both instances a command was given that tested the faith of the recipient. Only in implicit obedience would healing be found. The waters of Jordan were to be to Naaman the waters of healing and life. There is wisdom in obeying the commands of the Lord.

11. *I thought.* Naaman had his own thoughts, but these were not the thoughts of God. He had heard of a man who could cure him of his leprosy, and immediately he came to his own conclusions as to exactly how this should and would be accomplished. He made a plan of his own, and then expected that God would work according to that plan. But man's preconceptions as to what should be the Lord's mode of action are often erroneous. When we map out beforehand the path of Providence, we may expect disappointments. God chose to lead Israel out of Egypt by a passage through the Red Sea, but that was not the thought of man. God sent His Son to be born in stable and cradled in a manger, but that was not according to the ideas of the great and mighty of earth. God had His Son live among men as a servant to those in need, but that was not in accord with the thoughts of the Jews concerning the Messiah who was to come. The man who would be saved and walk in the ways of the Lord must learn that God's ways are infinitely higher and better than the ways of men (Isa. 55:8, 9).

12. *Abana and Pharpar.* In the sight of man these rivers undoubtedly were better than all the waters of Israel. The rivers of Damascus were pleasant, and made the area blossom as a rose. Compared with these life-giving rivers of his own country, the Jordan was to Naaman a small and disappointing stream. Yet if he wanted to be healed of his leprosy, it was in the Jordan and not in the Abana that he was to bathe. Abana is thought to be identical with Amana of S. of Sol. 4:8, the stream being named after the mountain that was its source. It was the important river of Damascus. The Pharpar is thought to have been a stream south of Damascus, which had its rise in the heights of Mt. Hermon.

13. *His servants.* How often servants prove themselves to be wiser than their masters, and underlings than kings. By heeding the words of his servants, Naaman was to find the way to life and restoration.

Some great thing. Naaman was a great man and expected to do great things. He was haughty and proud, and to wash in the waters of the Jordan would be a humiliating experience. But he was being tested by God for his own good. Only by complete obedience to the Lord's directions could he hope to find favor with God. His proud heart must yield, and he must gain the victory over his own stubborn, selfish will. He must acknowledge the God of Israel as more powerful than the idols of the Syrian groves, and the directions of Elisha as superior to his own thoughts and desires.

14. *The saying of the man of God.* Naaman had to bring himself to the place where he acknowledged Elisha as a man of God and a spokesman for Heaven before he could hope to secure the blessing for which he had come. There would have been no healing if he had not seen light in the prophet's words. But when he did according to the directions of the prophet, his leprosy was washed away. When God speaks through a prophet, it always pays to put aside one's own opinion and accept the message of the Lord. Only thus may we find ourselves walking in the ways of God and partaking of His blessings.

15. *He returned.* Naaman showed his gratitude by returning to Elisha to offer him a reward. In doing this he probably went far out of his way, but it was a journey that was not in vain. In all his conduct Naaman showed himself more in accord with the true spirit of a child of God than did those who claimed to be His people. When the Saviour was on earth, years afterward, He referred to the fact that there were many lepers in the land of Israel at the time of Elisha, but "none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian" (Luke 4:27). Israel was unappreciative of the presence and blessings of God. The commander of the armies of a heathen nation showed a faith and gratitude that were

foreign to the professed people of God. The Lord is close and kind to those who appreciate His blessings.

Now I know. Naaman had heard of God through the testimony of the Hebrew maid, but now he had become acquainted with Him through his own personal experience. Faith had become knowledge. There was now a ring of assurance in his testimony that would never have been the case had he not received this wonderful blessing from God. He knew now that outside of Israel there were no gods. The gods worshiped in Syria and the neighboring nations were only idols made by the hands of man. But the God of Israel was the Creator of heaven and earth, the Lord who gave life and hope to man. If every child of God were as faithful in bearing witness for Him as the captive Hebrew maid, all the people of earth would become acquainted with the Creator's wonderful love and care, and many would be led to give praise and thanksgiving to Him.

16. I will receive none. A prophet of the Lord does not serve for purposes of gain or reward. In the new life that had come to Naaman and the faith that had sprung up within his heart, Elisha had his reward. A laborer is worthy of his hire, and those who receive blessings from God may give offerings of thanksgiving to Him, but under the circumstances it was best for Elisha to refuse the proffered gift. Naaman must not be left with the impression that prophets of the true God acted from motives of self-interest or that the blessing of God could be purchased for money.

17. Two mules' burden of earth. Naaman thought of the God of Israel as a divinity who must be worshiped on the soil of Israel. In those days each nation had its own outstanding divinity, and many cities had their own local gods. Although Naaman had recognized the fact that outside of Israel there was no God, he had not entirely divested himself of the view that the God of Israel was in some special way attached to the land of Israel, and in his own country he wanted to worship that God on Israelite soil.

Unto other gods. When Naaman had made his acquaintance with God, he gave his heart to Him and determined to give up the worship of the Syrian gods he had known from his youth. In every land there are those who are as earnest and sincere as Naaman, and who are waiting only for the faithful testimony and the holy lives of the people of God before giving their hearts to Him.

18. The Lord pardon. While Naaman purposed to serve God, he knew that in his own country, which was devoted to the worship of idols, this would not be easy. The king of Syria still worshiped the god Rimmon, and in this service Naaman would be an attendant of the king. Naaman had no thought of turning his back on the service of his earthly king, although he had definitely made up his mind that henceforth he would worship only the Lord. But as the king bowed in worship to Rimmon, he would lean on Naaman's arm (see ch. 7:2, 17). Naaman did not wish to be understood as also bowing in worship to the heathen god. Having given his heart to Jehovah, he had no intention of compromising his faith by also worshiping Rimmon, nor did he want word to get back to Elisha that he was so doing. He was a man of tender conscience, and before taking his departure from Israel wished to make clear his scruples.

19. Go in peace. These words must not be thought of as either expressing approval or disapproval of Naaman's parting request. He was to depart in peace, not in doubt or restless uncertainty. God had been kind to him, and he was to find happiness and peace in his knowledge and worship of God. Naaman was a new convert, a man with conscientious scruples, who would grow in strength and wisdom if he clung to his new-

found faith. God leads new converts on step by step, and knows the appropriate moment in which to call for a reform in a certain matter. This principle ought always to be borne in mind by those who labor for the salvation of souls. Elisha knew that this was not the suitable moment to insist on a drastic change in this particular matter of behavior. He was a man of keen spiritual insight, and in his treatment of Naaman, wished to be tactful and prudent. So he sent him away, not with a word of rebuke but with a message of peace similar to that contained in Jesus' farewell to His disciples (John 14:27).

20. *But Gehazi.* The Biblical writer has just given a beautiful picture of an important Syrian official leaving Israel as a new convert to Jehovah, with joy and peace in his heart, healed of leprosy and converted in spirit. But the scene changes abruptly with the words, "But Gehazi." When God gives men happiness and peace, Satan attempts to introduce trouble. Into every symphony he seeks to introduce a discordant note. Here the servant of the prophet allows himself to become a tool in the enemy's hand to all but spoil the picture so beautifully drawn.

Hath spared Naaman. These words reveal the thoughts and spirit of Gehazi. He thought of Naaman not as a new convert to God but as a soldier from an enemy land. The Syrians had spoiled Israel; why should an Israelite now spare one of them? Gehazi probably thought of his master Elisha as weak and simple-minded in refusing to take from Naaman the gift he was so willing to give.

As the Lord liveth. These words are here a profane oath, uttered by a man who is trying to persuade himself that he is doing something in the service of God when he knows full well that he is doing wrong. Blinded by avarice, Gehazi will take pay for services he did not perform, from a man from whom Elisha believed he should accept nothing.

21. *Lighted down.* This was an Oriental mark of respect. Gehazi was, after all, only the servant of Elisha, and Naaman was under no obligations to show him this uncalled-for courtesy. But it indicates the strong feeling of gratitude that welled within his breast. Naaman had conquered his natural pride and animosity, and now the commander of the armies of Syria, which had been victorious over Israel, descends from his chariot that he may deal on terms of equality with the servant of a Hebrew prophet.

Is all well? Naaman was startled as he saw Gehazi running, and must have thought that some ill had befallen the prophet or that some other calamity had occurred.

22. *My master hath sent me.* Gehazi now sought to cloak his avarice with a lie. Elisha was to be made responsible for the servant's greed. The worthy name of the unselfish prophet was to be defamed by the cupidity of his unworthy servant. One sin rarely stands alone, for evil always leads the way to more and greater evil.

From mount Ephraim. There were at least two schools of the prophets in the highlands of Ephraim, Bethel and Gilgal (see on ch. 2:1).

Two young men. Gehazi did not wish to be recognized as displaying his greed. Rather, he would play the part of a friend concerned about two young men in need. Would not Naaman be interested in them to the extent of assisting them with one of his ten talents of silver and two of his ten changes of raiment?

23. *Be content.* The meaning is, "please," or, "kindly consent to," take not one talent but two. The grateful Naaman would give double that which Gehazi had asked for, and he would also send two of his servants to bear the burden to the prophet's home.

24. The tower. Heb. *'ophel*, a “mound” or “hill”; often the structure on the hill whether a watchtower, a house, a fort, or a lookout point. Elisha had his home in Samaria, probably on an eminence from which he could see men approaching afar (see ch. 6:30–32). But on this occasion Gehazi, returning with the two talents of silver, did not wish to be seen by his master. So the hill here referred to seems to have been one between the home of Elisha and the place where Gehazi overtook Naaman, which interrupted the view. At that place Naaman’s servants were dismissed and Gehazi received the treasure and placed it in hiding.

25. Went no whither. To shield himself from his master’s censure, Gehazi now resorted to another falsehood. Again sin led to sin, and one lie to another. The trail of evil has no end. He who embarks upon a course of deception will inevitably find himself engaging in deception to cover up deception.

26. Went not mine heart? The Lord had revealed to Elisha exactly what had taken place, how Gehazi had run out after Naaman, how he had lied to him and had succeeded in securing the coveted gift, and how it had been hidden. Man may lie to his fellow men, but he cannot lie to God. Deeds of evil may be hidden from the eyes of man, but the eyes of the Lord see all (see Heb. 4:13).

It is a time to receive money? What a terrible rebuke the words of Elisha brought home to the heart of his servant! A notable miracle had been performed. The commander of the armies of Syria had been brought to believe in God and to rejoice in his new-found faith. God had been gracious to His servants, and heaven had come very close to earth. Gehazi’s heart should have been uplifted in praise and thanksgiving to God for the wonderful blessings received. He should have thought of how Naaman’s heart might be favorably impressed and how the Syrian commander might be brought to feel that the faith of the Israelites was the world’s only true religion which made men unselfish, honest, and kind. But instead he thought only of himself and of his own interests.

Elisha’s words of rebuke were not only for his servant Gehazi but for those in God’s church today who manifest the same spirit as did Gehazi. In our day God has again been very near, and wonderful miracles of grace have been wrought in many lands. Sinners everywhere are being reclaimed and songs of thanksgiving and victory are ascending to God. But once more in the hearts of some the spirit of avarice and greed has been allowed to prevail. They are engaged in the service of self. Silver is being hoarded and hidden that should be employed toward the salvation of men. Once more God is looking down from heaven, and the question is asked, “Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments?”

Oliveyards. Gehazi had been thinking of the disposition he would make of his wealth, and the prophet here probably enumerates the purchases his servant intended to make.

27. Cleave unto thee. The day that brought so great a blessing to Naaman the Syrian brought a terrible curse to the Hebrew servant of the prophet of God. Naaman went on his way in peace, his heart rejoicing in his new hope in God. Gehazi carried the results of his sin to his grave. He remained a leper to the day of his death, cursed by Heaven, despised by his fellow men, an object lesson for all time to come of the folly of greed and the emptiness of a life that seeks first the treasures of this world rather than the treasures of the kingdom of God. During his years of fellowship with Elisha, Gehazi had had the opportunity of learning lessons of the joy and satisfaction of a life of unselfish devotion and love. But he had failed to learn his lesson. The gifts of Heaven were spurned while he

reached out for earthly treasure, which, like cancer, eats away the souls of men. Instead of developing a spirit of self-denial while engaged in the service of God, he had allowed himself to become selfish and interested in material gain. His interest was in shekels of silver rather than in the souls of men, in garments of linen rather than in garments of righteousness.

For ever. It must not be thought that because of the sin of Gehazi, God was pronouncing a curse upon his posterity that would endure for all time. The Lord is kind and merciful and never brings unjust or unnecessary affliction upon anyone. Gehazi, because of his greed, had brought a dreadful judgment upon himself. Because of that judgment his children would be forced to suffer. Disease and its effects are often passed on to an innocent posterity. But to say that because Gehazi became a leper, his descendants throughout all the ages to come would likewise be lepers, is to say something that is not true.

The Hebrew expression here used, *le'olam*, does not necessarily mean without cessation, or to all eternity. The word '*olam*', when applied to God, means without end; when applied to man's life, it extends only to the end of human existence. In Ex. 21:6 a servant was to serve his master "for ever." Of the strangers that sojourned in their land the Israelites were to make "bondmen for ever" (Lev. 25:46). Shortly before the death of David, Bath-sheba bowed herself before the king with the words, "Let my lord king David live for ever" (1 Kings 1:31). So also Nehemiah said to King Artaxerxes, "Let the king live for ever" (Neh. 2:3). The smoke of the earth in the day of the Lord's vengeance is described as going "up for ever" (Isa. 34:10). When Jonah pictured his descent into the belly of the whale, he said that the bars of the earth were about him "for ever" (Jonah 2:6). The expression *le'olam* simply means "age lasting," and the length of time involved must be deduced from the particular idea with which the expression is associated (see on Ex. 12:14; 21:6).

White as snow. This expression is used elsewhere in connection with sudden attacks of leprosy (see Ex. 4:6; Num. 12:10).

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1–27PK 244–253

1, 2 PK 244

1–3ML 222

2, 3 MH 473

3 PK 245

5–11PK 246

11–14AA 416; DA 239; 2T 309

12–15PK 249

16–21PK 250

21–27PK 251

25–274T 336

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³Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (2 Ki 2:16). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

CHAPTER 6

1 *Elisha, giving leave to the young prophets to enlarge their dwellings, causeth iron to swim. 8 He discloseth the king of Syria's counsel. 13 The army, which was sent to Dothan to apprehend Elisha, is smitten with blindness. 19 Being brought into Samaria, they are dismissed in peace. 24 The famine in Samaria causeth women to eat their own children. 30 The king sendeth to slay Elisha.*

1. Sons of the prophets. These were students at one of the schools of the prophets, probably the one at Jericho, for they went to the Jordan to secure timber (v. 2).

Where we dwell. Literally, "the place where we sit before thee," probably the place where they assembled under the charge of the prophet to hear his teaching. Elisha did not regularly make his home at this school, but only visited it from time to time in the course of his circuits among the various schools. The common hall where the students assembled to sit at the feet of the teacher seems to be the place referred to.

Too strait. The students in attendance at this school had become so numerous that they could no longer be accommodated in the available quarters. This was indicative of the prevailing interest in proper education as fostered by both Elijah and Elisha.

Let us go. The suggestion came not from Elisha but from the students. These young men were not afraid of work. One of the objectives of the schools of the prophets was to give the students a practical training for life. The young men were trained to work like the people about them, for they were not to hold themselves aloof from those it was their responsibility to serve. Training the hand was in perfect accord with training the mind and the heart.

Go ye. The fact that permission was asked of Elisha and that it was he who gave the orders to proceed with the project shows that the prophet was a man of authority, having under his charge the direction of the various schools.

3. Be consent. That is, "be pleased," or, "kindly consent," to go with us. They had first asked for permission to go and do the work themselves, and now the invitation was extended to Elisha to accompany them.

I will go. Elisha was a man of the people. He was equally at home with kings and generals and with the workers at their daily toil. Never did he hold himself aloof. Wherever there was the opportunity to serve, wherever his presence was welcome, there he desired to be. The greater the leader, the greater the willingness to serve.

The axe head. The Jews used iron for axheads at a very early date. An axhead in those days was no more secure than it is in modern times, for the legislation of Moses deals with cases in which an axhead slips from the wood while a man is felling a tree (Deut. 19:5).

It was borrowed. This was a spontaneous cry from the lad who was cutting the wood. There was probably no intention of appealing to the prophet for divine aid in recovering the ax. It was an outcry from a conscientious young man who had had the misfortune of losing something that had been borrowed and who in all probability was too poor to make good the loss.

6. Where feel it? Elisha was a prophet who, by the power of God, had raised the dead and read what was in another's heart. But when the axhead fell into the water he did not know where it fell. Unless given a divine message, prophets acquire knowledge as their fellow men do. It is God who determines the need and the appropriate occasion for supplemental enlightenment. God performed no miracle to inform Elisha that the axhead

had fallen or where it had fallen. That was something for which a miracle was needed, and in such matters miracles are not performed.

A stick. The significance of the procedure is not revealed. God does not always tell us why or how certain things are done, nor is it necessary always to understand the ways of the Lord.

Did swim. That is, “floated.” It had been at the bottom, beyond the reach of the sons of the prophets. But by divine intervention it rose to the surface and remained there.

There are those who think that there is something trivial about such a miracle as this, and that it need not have been performed. Man, in the narrowness of his vision, is likely to reason that it is only in great things that divine intervention should be looked for. But there is not a grief or a heartache on the part of any of God’s children on earth but the Father’s great heart of sympathy goes out to the one in need. God’s heart still responds to the needs of the children of men, and Heaven still acts in their behalf. Not a day passes but the Lord intervenes in the interests of those who call upon Him, supplying their needs. The day of miracles is not yet over. There may not be an Elisah present, but in His own way God works in behalf of His children who have faith in Him.

7. Take it up. If the young man desired to have the ax returned, he also had a part to play. God could have caused the ax not only to swim but to return to its original position on the wood. But the Lord generally does not perform miracles for men in things they can do for themselves. The young man was perfectly able to reach out into the water and recover the floating ax, and that he was directed to do. When God asks us to take, His gifts will be ours when we reach out to receive. Disobedience and unbelief keep from us many of the greatest blessings of God.

8. The king of Syria warred. Israel and Syria were at this time in a state of almost constant war. If there was not open conflict, there were border raids. At the time that Ahab met his death, the armies of Israel had gone against Syria to retake Ramoth in Gilead across the Jordan (1 Kings 22:3, 4). After the death of Ahab it was Syria that had the upper hand over Israel, and now its armies were once more on Israelite soil. Benhadad II was still king in Syria (2 Kings 6:24).

Such and such a place. The particular place is of no importance. At one time it would be in one place, and then again in another.

Shall be my camp. What is meant here is more than an open permanent camp, for the whole countryside soon would know where that was located and could so inform the king without the prophet. What is probably referred to by this obscure Hebrew word, unattested elsewhere, is an ambush set for a sudden raid, where the element of surprise or secrecy was involved.

9. The man of God sent. The careful counsel that the king of Syria had taken in secret with his officers had been revealed to Elisha, who in turn took that information to Israel’s king.

Are come down. Rather, “are coming down,” or, “are planning to come down.” What was revealed by Elisha was information concerning the plans that the Syrians had in mind, so that, having learned of those tactical plans in advance, the king of Israel was able to send sufficient troops to the places involved to cope with the Syrians at the time of their arrival.

10. Saved himself. That is, saved the situation, for himself and the nation. Knowing the plans of the enemy, he was saved from falling into the enemy’s trap.

11. Sore troubled. Every time a plan had been laid in the utmost secrecy, the enemy would know the details. If this had happened only once or twice, it might not have occasioned alarm, but when it came to be a regular thing, the king of Syria was troubled and was determined to learn the cause.

Which of us? As far as Benhadad was concerned, there seemed to be only one cause—a traitor in the camp. He was certain that information was leaking out through someone whose sympathies were with Israel rather than Syria, or who had been bought off to serve the enemy rather than his own nation. Would not someone among them reveal the traitor?

12. In thy bedchamber. The best-guarded and most inaccessible place in an Oriental palace. Words spoken there would be truly secret, beyond the ears of even the closest friends of the king.

13. Dothan. A town on the regular caravan route between Gilead and Egypt, near the plain of Esdraelon and a pass leading to the highlands of Samaria. It was 14 1/8 mi. (22.6 km.) north by east from Shechem, and 10 mi. (16 km.) north by east of Samaria. It was here that a band of Ishmaelites on their way from Gilead to Egypt purchased Joseph (Gen. 37:17–28). This site is now known as *Tell Dôthā*.

14. Sent he thither horses. Being on the regular caravan route, Dothan could readily be approached by a large company of soldiers equipped with horses and chariots.

15. Servant. Heb. *meshareth* (see on ch. 4:43). This servant was not Gehazi, who was under a terrible curse for his crime (ch. 5:27). Perhaps it was one of the prophet-disciples who had accompanied Elisha to Dothan. By being thus associated with the prophet in his labors, these young men would receive valuable experience.

Alas, my master! The young man had neither the faith of his master nor the strength and courage that come as the result of experience.

16. Fear not. How often the Lord speaks to His children these reassuring words! In the sojourn of life the people of God often find themselves in situations that would cause them to be uncertain and afraid, but God makes His presence known and speaks words of courage and hope (see Gen. 15:1; 46:3; Ex. 14:13; Num. 14:9; Deut. 1:21; Isa. 43:1; Luke 12:32). As long as God's people are on earth, difficulties will arise and dangers will need to be met. Satan will do his utmost to cause the righteous to give way to doubt and fear, but through the mist of uncertainty and doubt the voice of the Lord still comes to us clear and assuring: "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

Are more. When a man of God is surrounded by the enemies of the Lord, he may always have the assurance that the strength that is with him is infinitely greater than the strength of the enemy. When the armies of Sennacherib surrounded the city of Jerusalem and demanded surrender, Hezekiah spoke to his people a similar message of courage (2 Chron. 32:7, 8). The weakest child of God, seemingly alone and forsaken on earth, need never be afraid of all the forces the enemy may send against him. With God on his side he is more than a match for the mightiest hosts of evil.

17. Open his eyes. The greatest realities cannot be seen with eyes of flesh. God and His angels are invisible to man without the help of the Lord. With the eyes of flesh we can see only things of flesh. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned. Our greatest need is that our eyes may be opened and we may see God and the vital importance of the things of His kingdom. Unless God opens our eyes we may go through life as blind men, never understanding the things of Lord, never seeing the vital importance righteousness or

appreciating the importance of holiness. When we pray to God our eyes are opened, and we begin to see the importance of the most vital things of earth.

The mountain was full. Angels of God are the constant companions of the righteous. Surrounding the upright are guardian messengers from heaven through whose ranks it is impossible for evil angels to penetrate unless the saints, through their own choice, refuse the protection of Heaven. One man with the Lord's help is more than a match for the mightiest powers of earth (see Ps. 3:6; 27:1, 3; 34:7). The horses and chariots round about Elisha were myriads of powerful angels sent by God to watch over His servants.

18. Blindness. Heb. *sanwerim*, which occurs only here (twice) and in Gen. 19:11. The derivation of the word is uncertain. Some have thought that total physical blindness is not meant, but only a state of illusion in which the men would not be able to see things as they actually were (see on Gen. 19:11). Two problems present themselves: (1) How would Elisha have been able to lead this company of men over the 11 mi. of mountainous terrain to Samaria if the group was totally blind? (2) Why would the men persist in their purpose of apprehending Elisha, seeing such an attempt was futile without eyesight? If the blindness was total, the explanation lies in the fact that these men were smitten with "double blindness" (see PP 159). The blindness of soul would lead them to persist in their evil course despite the stroke of God. The miracle may have extended beyond the affliction of physical blindness so as to make it possible for Elisha to lead these men to Samaria as well as to keep them to their purpose of taking him into custody.

19. This is not the way. Similar instances where the enemies of the Lord were led to form mistaken conclusions that brought them defeat, were, for example, (1) Gideon's making his 300 men appear to the Midianites as an overwhelming force (Judges 7:19–21); (2) the appearance of the waters as blood in the battle with the Moabites (2 Kings 3:22–23); (3) the noise that the Syrians interpreted to be the noise of the approaching armies of the Hittites and the Egyptians (2 Kings 7:6). See also Joshua 8:15.

21. Unto Elisha. The king looked to the prophet for directions, not the prophet to the king. The king wore the crown of the realm, but the prophet spoke in the name of the Lord. Joram was in command of the hosts of Israel, but legions of angels had been placed at Elisha's command.

My father. The use of this phrase does not indicate any filial relationship, but the respect in which Elisha was held by the king.

Shall I smite them? The repetition of the words indicate Joram's eagerness to slay the Syrians whom the prophet had brought within his grasp. But the fact that he did not immediately smite them indicates that he had certain misgivings concerning the propriety of such a course.

22. Thou shalt not smite them. Joram was forbidden to smite the captives, since the object of the miracle was not to have the Syrians put to death but in part, at least, to open their eyes to the fact that it was utterly vain to attempt anything against a prophet of God. Through the captive Hebrew maid in the service of Naaman, the Syrians had had an opportunity to become acquainted with the Lord's mercy and power. God desired to bring to them further lessons concerning His love and irresistible might. Unless the captive Syrians had now returned to their homeland and told their countrymen what had taken place, the Lord's object in this miracle would not have been realized.

Wouldest thou smite? It would have been an inexcusable crime for the king of Israel to slay in cold blood prisoners whom he had taken captive in war. Elisha is making clear

to Joram that these men are prisoners of war and have every right to be treated as such. Even under normal circumstances it would have been a crime for the king to put to death prisoners taken with his own hand. Under the present circumstances the crime would have been all the more reprehensible, and would have put Israel and its God in an utterly wrong light before the people of Syria.

Set bread and water. That is, treat them not as prisoners but as guests. The Syrians were to be given an object lesson of the power of the Israelite religion in making men merciful and kind (see Prov. 25:21, 22; Matt. 5:44).

23. Provision. Heb. *kerah*, a “feast,” or “banquet.” The Syrians were given not ordinary food but such as was prepared for special occasions. According to the unwritten law of the desert, a man who accepts food in a tent becomes a friend and must be protected.

They went to their master. When they returned to their country the Syrians were a far different group of men from what they were when they made their inroad into Israel. From enemies they had been changed to friends. The meal that they had eaten had fed not only their bodies but their souls. They had learned a lesson that they would not soon forget.

Came no more. This was the natural effect of the chivalrous treatment that Joram had accorded his captives. For the time being the Syrian inroads into Israel ceased. Joram had accomplished by his feast what he could not have accomplished by force of arms. Kindness proved itself a more powerful weapon than the sword. When men do good to their enemies, they do good to themselves. God is kind not only to the righteous but also to the wicked, making “his sun to rise on the evil and on the good” and sending “rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matt. 5:45). So men are to love their enemies and treat with kindness those who do ill to them. Only by such a spirit can the bitterness and strife between the children of men be driven out.

24. After this. How long it was from the time that Joram prepared his feast for the Syrian invaders of Israel till the time that Benhadad besieged Samaria is not recorded. It must, however, have been a number of years, for the old spirit of enmity had again sprung up between the two nations. What the cause for this new war between Israel and Syria might have been is not revealed.

Ben-hadad. That is, Benhadad II. The first Benhadad was a contemporary of Asa (1 Kings 15:18–20). Benhadad II is the same king whom Ahab had twice defeated, and to whom he had shown such unseasonable lenity that he had received a prophetic rebuke (1 Kings 20:1–42). It was in battle with this same king three years later that Ahab lost his life (1 Kings 22:1–37). Benhadad is mentioned a number of times in the records of Shalmaneser III of Assyria, where he appears in cuneiform text in a form that may be read either *Addu-’idri* or *Bir-’idri*. The latter form is preferred by Assyriologists. In an Aramaic inscription from Hamath he is called *Bar-hadad*. The Assyrians may have thought that the *Bar* stood for the Babylonian god *Bir*, and also misread the *Hadad* for *Hadar*, since *d* and *r* may easily be confused in Aramaic script. Whatever the correct explanation for the origin of difference between the two names, there is no doubt that the Ben-hadad of the Bible, the *Bar-hadad* of the Aramaic inscription, and the *Bir-’idri* of the Assyrian texts refer to the same person. The Heb. *Ben-hadad*, means “son of Hadad,”

Hadad being the name of the well-known west Semitic storm god. *Bir-’idri* appears on the Assyrian inscriptions as king of Syria as late as the 14th year of Shalmaneser, when the Assyrian king claims to have won a great victory over him and his allies.

Besieged Samaria. This was not a minor border raid but serious war of the utmost intensity. Benhadad probably took advantage of a time when Shalmaneser was not engaged in active campaigns in the Mediterranean area.

25. Great famine. Famines were not uncommon in Israel. At the time of Elijah there was a drought that lasted for three and a half years (1 Kings 17:1 to 8:1; Luke 4:25; James 5:17), and in the days of Elisha there was a famine for seven years (2 Kings 8:1). The present famine, however, was the result of the siege.

Fourscore pieces of silver. That is, 80 shekels (912 grams, about 2.5 lb. troy) of silver for the head of an ass. An ass was unclean to the Hebrews, and would not be eaten except as a last resort; and its head would be its worst and cheapest part. Plutarch records that at the time of a famine during the reign of Artaxerxes Mnemon, the head of an ass sold for 60 drachmas, though ordinarily the entire animal could be bought for half that sum. And Pliny relates that during the siege of Casalinum, a mouse was sold for 200 denarii.

The fourth part of a cab. A cab was equal to about 1.11 dry qts. (1.2 liters). Five pieces of silver means five shekels (57 grams, 1.8 oz. troy) of silver. It is difficult to believe that human beings could be reduced to such terrible straits as to eat such impossible food, but Josephus mentions that during the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, “some persons were driven to that terrible distress as to search the common sewers and old dunghills of cattle, and to eat the dung they got there” (*Wars* v. 13. 7). A more recent interpretation seeks to find in the expression “dove’s dung” a reference to some very cheap and undesirable form of vegetable produce—the meanest form of vegetable that could be used for human consumption. Such an identity cannot be proved.

26. Upon the wall. The walls of ancient fortified cities had a broad space at the top, protected by battlements at the outer edge, where the bulk of the defenders were stationed and from which they hurled stones or shot arrows at the enemy. The king seems to have been making the rounds of these defenses, encouraging his troops and acquainting himself with the progress of the siege. A woman in the street below, or perhaps from a housetop near the city wall, saw the king and appealed to him for help.

27. Whence shall I help? The situation was such as to be beyond the help of the king. Joram freely admitted that there was nothing within his power to relieve the woman’s distress. If the Lord did not help her, what was there that he could do in these dire straits?

Out of the barnfloor? Joram, in the irony of despair, calls the attention of the woman to a fact she already knows only too well: that all food, even at its sources, has long since been exhausted.

28. What aileth thee? The king had at first assumed that the woman was appealing to him for food. Now he realized that this may not have been the case, but that she may have had some other request. Perhaps he felt that, in full view of so many of the populace and the city’s defenders, he had answered her too harshly. After all he still was king and any citizen had the right to come to him for a final appeal. He agreed to listen to her petition.

29. We boiled my son. Israel had been warned by Moses that if they departed from God, they would be brought into just such straits, and that parents would eat the flesh of their own sons and daughters (Lev. 26:29; Deut. 28:53). This prophecy now met its awful

fulfillment. God foresaw exactly what the fearful results of transgression would finally be, and He did everything that divine love and forbearance could do to prevent matters from coming to such a pass as this. Moses' prophecy had another fulfillment when Jerusalem was besieged by Nebuchadnezzar (Lam. 4:10), and again in the final siege of the city by Titus (Josephus *Wars* vi. 3. 4).

Hath hid her son. A more touching and yet horrible grievance can hardly be imagined. In their terrible plight the two mothers had entered into a shocking compact. The one son was already eaten, but the second mother could not bring herself to go through with her part of the bargain. To save her son, she had hidden him, and now the first woman sought to force her to produce him by an appeal to the king. What could be the king do in such a case as this?

30. Rent his clothes. Under the circumstances this seemed to be the king's only possible response. He could not order a woman to produce her son that the child might be eaten, nor was he in a position to end this terrible distress. His clothes were rent, not in grief or repentance like his father (1 Kings 21:27), but in horror and consternation.

Sackcloth within. Instead of wearing sackcloth on the outside, Joram, it seems, had put on this ascetic garment under his outer attire and was wearing it less openly. By such a device he probably hoped to appease the wrath of Jehovah. The people saw in the sackcloth an expression of the king's sympathy for them in their distress.

31. The head of Elisha. Elisha had called upon the people to repent and doubtless had made it clear to them that if they did not put away their sins and turn to the Lord with all their hearts, they might expect trouble and distress. The king was bitter against the prophet and now sought to place the blame on him for the continuance of the siege and famine. In doing so he followed the same course as had his brother Ahaziah, and his father Ahab (see on ch. 1:10). A man who was truly penitent would have worn sackcloth openly rather than in secret, and he would not have turned upon God's prophet. Beheading was not an ordinary form of punishment among the Jews, but was common in Assyria and other neighboring nations. With his heart filled with bitterness and wrath, Joram now threatened Elisha with this horrible form of capital punishment.

32. The elders sat. These probably included not only the leaders of the city but also the nobles and chiefs of the entire land. As such they were the most respected and the most substantial citizens of the state. At this hour of emergency they had gone to the home of Elisha, obviously for his advice and assistance. Their imminent peril caused them to acknowledge the power of Jehovah and to seek for help from His prophet. Later, when the inhabitants of Jerusalem found themselves in a similar crisis, Jeremiah was consulted for guidance and information concerning the will of the Lord (Jer. 21:1, 2; 38:14).

Ere the messenger came. Joram sought to take the life of Elisha, and sent a man with orders to behead the prophet. But before his arrival, the Lord forewarned Elisha of the king's intentions, so that the matter could be clearly set before the leaders of the land.

Son of a murderer. Ahab, the father of Joram, was guilty not only of the blood of Naboth but also of the prophets who were slain by Jezebel with his full consent. Even his faithful servant Obadiah feared that he would be put to death by Ahab when told to go to him with a message concerning Elijah (1 Kings 18:9). Joram, the son of a murderer, possessed the same evil traits as his father.

Hath sent. The executioner was already on his way, but Elisha showed no concern. He was a prophet of the Lord and knew that his life was in the hands of God and not at the mercy of evil men.

Hold him fast at the door. Literally, “Press him back with [or at] the door.” That is, close the door and hold it fast against him that he may not enter. The prophet had done nothing worthy of death and had not been convicted of any crime. As the messenger of Heaven he had a perfect right to give the instructions he did, even though they countermanded the orders of the king. It is the responsibility of rulers to protect, not persecute, the upright, law-abiding citizen. Murder is as wrong for a king as for any ordinary individual within the realm.

Behind him. Following close upon the heels of the would-be executioner came the king, to see whether or not his orders had been carried out.

33. And he said. The question has been raised as to whose words these were, those of the messenger or of the king. Whether or not the king had already arrived at this time, these words evidently originated with the king. The messenger would have no right to speak thus in his own name. If he spoke these words, then he had been sent to speak them in the name of the king. It appears, however, that the king had now arrived and was himself doing the speaking. True, the Scriptural record does not announce his actual arrival, either here or in the following verses, but inasmuch as Elisha said that the king was following hard after the messenger, his coming could not have been long delayed. The words now spoken reflect the mind of the king. He is angry with the prophet and with the God he represents. He declares that this trouble the land is going through has all come from God, and He must carry the blame. Not able to vent his wrath on God, Joram will now vent it on His prophet.

What should I wait? Joram is asking why he should temporize with God. He believes that the Lord has arbitrarily brought this evil upon Samaria, and that He is therefore responsible for all the horrors that are taking place. This sudden action against the prophet is the king’s response to the woman who had appealed to him (see v. 26). Put to the test in plain sight of the soldiers and the people, the king in his dilemma was forced to some sort of action, and his decision was to turn upon God and Elisha. Since God had brought the siege, God would do nothing to bring it to an end, so Joram’s only course—as he tried to persuade himself—was to turn against God and take matters in his own hands. This he was now proceeding to do in issuing an order for the death of Elisha.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–33PK 255–261

1, 22 PK 260

1–7Ed 217

5–7PK 260

8–17PK 256

16, 17 DA 40; PK 264

17 Ed 255; GC 208; PK 590

18–23PK 257

24–33PK 258

CHAPTER 7

1 *Elisha prophesieth incredible plenty in Samaria.* 3 *Four lepers, venturing on the host of the Syrians, bring tidings of their flight.* 12 *The king, finding by spies the news to be true,*

spoil the tents of the Syrians. 17 The lord, who would not believe the prophecy of plenty, having the charge of the gate, is trodden to death in the press.

1. The word of the Lord. The king of Israel had expressed his opinion, and now Elisha was to reveal the will of the Lord. It should be noted that the division between chapters six and seven at this point is artificial. A proper division would have been at ch. 6:24, where the present narrative begins. Elisha is now taking up the challenge of the king and is relating what the Lord is about to do. In full view of the people Joram had placed the blame for the present crisis upon God, and having turned against the Lord, he now proposed taking things into his own hands, in the hope of finding some means of relief. Elisha reveals that it is God and not the king who will provide relief.

Measure. Heb. *se'ah*. Six cabs were equal to a seah, and three seahs were equal to an ephah. The seah was approximately 6.66 dry qts. (6.4 liters) (see Vol. I, p. 167). On one day "the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung" sold for "five pieces of silver" (ch. 6:25). But on the next day 24 times that amount of wheat would be sold for a fifth the price. Or in other words, the amount of money that during the famine would purchase a bit of the cheapest and lowliest product that could be used to sustain life, would on the following day purchase 120 times as much of the best wheat flour.

The gate of Samaria. In Oriental cities where access is had to cities by gates through the city walls, the gate becomes a busy and thriving market place. When food became available, one of the gates of Samaria would be the center of distribution.

2. A lord. Heb. *hashshalish*, literally, "the third [man]," or "the thirdling." Originally, the word probably denoted the third man on a chariot, as among the Hittites. The Assyrians assigned only two men to each of their chariots. Later it became the title of an important functionary in Oriental courts. When Jehu slew Joram, it was his *shalish*, Bidkar, who was ordered to dispose of the body of the fallen king (ch. 9:24, 25). The fact that this officer is described as one "on whose hand the king leaned," indicates that he must have been an individual of some importance, probably an official who was a personal attendant of the king and to whom at times important responsibilities were entrusted. It was this official who on the morrow was to be placed in charge of the gate of Samaria, where food would be offered for sale (ch. 7:16–18). The fact that this officer was present at this time at the home of Elisha suggests that the king was likewise present (see on ch. 6:33).

Answered. The officer sought to show how foolish and utterly impossible was the statement Elisha had just made. Thus he endeavored to defend the king in the position he had taken of placing no confidence in Jehovah.

Not eat thereof. The scoffer was to be a personal witness to the fulfillment of Elisha's prophecy, but because of his unbelief he would not be permitted to participate in the blessings it would bring.

3. At the entering in. Being lepers, these men were not normally allowed within the city. The law of Moses required lepers to abide "without the camp" (Lev. 13:46; Num. 5:2, 3). They were thus without the city walls, but near the gate.

Why sit we here? In better times the people of the city probably supplied the lepers with food. But now, because of the famine, nobody brought these unfortunate sufferers food any longer, and they faced starvation.

5. In the twilight. They waited till nightfall, when in the darkness they could make their way to the enemy camp unobserved by their countrymen upon the walls, who might consider their scheme an act of desertion.

The uttermost part. That is, the edge of the Syrian camp nearest the city, not its most distant part.

6. To hear a noise. For similar examples, see on ch. 6:19.

Hath hired. The use of mercenary troops was common in antiquity. The children of Ammon hired the Syrians for resistance against David (2 Sam. 10:6 and 1 Chron. 19:6, 7). In the shifting political relationships of the ancient East, the force of any national group could at some time or other find itself arrayed against almost any other people.

The Hittites. See p. 30. Only remnants of the once powerful Hittite kingdom were now in existence. But the little Hittite states of northern Syria retained many of their original warlike characteristics, and their forces could provide a serious threat to the armies of Syria.

Kings of the Egyptians. This was the time of the Twenty-second Dynasty of Egypt (see on 1 Kings 14:25) when the capital was at Bubastis in the eastern Delta and Egypt was ruled by a dynasty of Lybian kings. The “kings of the Egyptians” undoubtedly refers to certain minor and subsidiary kinglets rather than to the king of Egypt proper.

7. They arose and fled. The picture is one of wild and precipitous flight. Believing themselves surrounded by enemies on every side, the Syrians rushed from the camp, each man thinking only of his own safety. Everything was left behind.

8. Did eat. The lepers thought first of satisfying their gnawing hunger. Then they responded to the natural impulse of helping themselves to the treasure that was simply waiting to be carried away.

9. We do not well. They were not doing well, but they were a long time finding it out. Inside the city, men, women, and children were starving, but all this time the lepers were interested only in themselves. By allowing their countrymen to perish within reach of plenty, the lepers would bring the blood of the dying upon their grasping hands and greedy hearts. The lepers finally came to see that their good fortune had brought them a responsibility as well as an opportunity.

Some mischief. A guilty conscience recognizes the fact that the perpetrator of evil has a price to pay. No one may sin with impunity. Wickedness always finds its way back to the head of the guilty one.

11. The porters. The warders or keepers of the gate.

12. I will now shew you. Joram could not believe that what God’s prophet had foretold had actually come to pass. In his unbelief he could think only of evil at the hour of deliverance and blessing. The Syrians were gone, but he believed it not. Food was there for the taking, but he could not bring himself to accept that fact. God had been kind and good and had kept His word, but the king refused to acknowledge it. His evil and suspicious nature prevented him from realizing that the horrors of the siege were over and that undreamed of bounties were to be had for all who would believe and receive.

13. One of his servants. The servant displayed greater wisdom than the king. His answer was one of faith and practical good sense. There was the possibility that the report of the lepers might after all be true. Why not make an effort to find out, especially when that effort might be made at little cost. A few horses were still left in the city. Why not risk them in such a cause as this?

14. Two chariot horses. Literally, “two horse chariots.” According to the LXX the men went on horseback.

15. Unto Jordan. Every evidence was that the Syrians were headed for home. As far as possible they followed the road that would take them to the Jordan and on to Damascus. The shortest distance to the Jordan was at least 20 mi. (32 km.), a long way considering the circumstances, but the Hebrew messengers were determined to ascertain the facts. Everything indicated that the Syrians had fled in abject terror, discarding anything that might hinder their flight.

16. According to the word of the Lord. But not according to the ideas of the king. Under every circumstances it pays to ascertain the word of the Lord. That word is always true. What God says will surely come to pass. He who has faith in God may walk a path that is altogether sure. Unbelief is constantly being rebuked by fulfilled prophecy. If Joram had turned to the Lord, he might have given his people a message of hope. If he had accepted the words of Elisha, he might have rested in peace and set before his people an example of courage and trust. Man always loses when he refuses to believe the word of the Lord. Faith in God is the way of wisdom and life. It brings to man joy and peace in this world, and points the way to an eternity of peace in the world hereafter.

17. Charge of the gate. At such an hour this was an important responsibility. At the news of the Syrians’ flight there would be only one thought in the minds of all—to get out of the city gate and find food. The situation was not easy to control. In all probability the king at this vital hour also chose to take his position at the city gate, perhaps above it, on the city wall, where he would have a good view both of the city and the Syrian camp.

18. It came to pass. In this and the following verses the writer largely repeats what he has already said. With obvious satisfaction he states again the predictions of Elisha and the officer’s words of doubt, and shows again how completely the prophet’s predictions had been fulfilled.

It was by such experiences as these that the Lord was slowly drawing the children of Israel back again to faith and obedience, and to the religion of their fathers. For many years the people had been worshiping idols. Both priests and rulers were evil. Kings took a leading part in apostasy and iniquity. Injustice, immorality, intemperance, and cruelty were to be seen on every hand. Temples of worship became seats of iniquity. God’s chosen people had strayed far from righteousness and the ways of holiness and peace. They needed to learn anew concerning God, that He was kind and good, that He loved His people, and that He desired them to walk in the ways of mercy, justice, and truth. Under Israel’s present circumstances these lessons were exceedingly hard to learn. Ordinary measures did not suffice. Therefore such men as Elijah and Elisha were sent, proclaiming messages of rebuke and appeal and working singular miracles. The result was that many were brought back again to reason and righteousness and to faith and obedience to God. Holy men of God were living out before their fellows the life and love of God, and as a consequence a new spirit and hope were coming back into the hearts and lives of men. Once more the peace and righteousness of heaven were beginning to be seen among the children of earth. The work of Elisha was not in vain.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–20PK 258, 259

1 PK 259

3–9, 16PK 258

CHAPTER 8

1 *The Shunammite, having left her country seven years, to avoid the forewarned famine, for Elisha's miracle sake hath her land restored by the king.* 7 *Hazael, being sent with a present by Ben-hadad to Elisha at Damascus, after he had heard the prophecy, killeth his master, and succeedeth him.* 16 *Jehoram's wicked reign in Judah.* 20 *Edom and Libnah revolt.* 23 *Ahaziah succeedeth Jehoram.* 25 *Ahaziah's wicked reign.* 28 *He visiteth Jehoram wounded, at Jezreel.*

1. Then. Heb. *we*, a simple conjunction, most frequently translated “and.” It should not be construed as having reference to time as if the events to be related followed chronologically those of the preceding chapter. The opening clause of the chapter may as correctly be translated, “and Elisha had said.” Events related in Scripture do not necessarily take place in exact accord with the sequence in which they have been recorded.

This incident took place some time after that recorded in ch. 4:8–37, but how long after we do not know. At the time of the restoration of the son the husband was still alive. But now there are indications that she may have become a widow. At least her husband is not mentioned, and the instructions given to leave her once prosperous home seem to be directed to one who was without the guiding help of a husband.

Sojourn. Elisha took a kindly interest in the people whom he was called to serve. He tried to be a friend to all. Wherever he could do something to make the lot of someone lighter and better, there he was ready to help. There were hard times ahead, and the woman was counseled to depart for a time to sojourn in some place where the situation would be easier than at her home at Shunem.

A famine ... seven years. This famine took place sometime during the reign of Joram of Israel, but exactly when, it is impossible to say

2. Did after the saying. The woman of Shunem had learned that there are blessings in the path of obedience. The instruction given was by the direction of God, and although difficulties and hardships still lay ahead, the results would have been far worse if she had refused to obey those instructions.

Land of the Philistines. The Philistines were settled upon a fertile plain between the sea and the mountainous highlands of central Palestine. It was a land of plenty as compared with the rocky slopes of the central ridge. When there was a famine in the land of Canaan, Isaac took his sojourn into the land of the Philistines (Gen. 26:1). Abraham, under similar conditions, had gone down to Egypt to sojourn there (Gen. 12:10). Naomi had sojourned in the land of Moab “about ten years” (Ruth 1:4). So now, during this seven-year period of famine, the woman of Shunem also took up her sojourn in the country of the Philistines.

3. For her house. The Shunammite woman had at one time been well to do. It was at her home that a room had been made for Elisha (ch. 4:8–11) and it was on her land that her son had fallen ill at the harvest season (ch. 4:18, 19). While she was absent in Philistia her house and fields had been appropriated by someone else. The property may have been taken over by the local authorities as abandoned by its owner, or some person in the neighborhood may have taken over her home as his own. Whoever it was who held the property, refused to give it up upon her return. She therefore made her appeal direct to the king. Appeals to the king by private citizens were common in the ancient Orient and

are repeatedly mentioned in the Biblical record (2 Sam. 14:4; 1 Kings 3:16; 2 Kings 6:26).

4. Talked with Gehazi. More correctly, the king “was talking” with Gehazi. The mention of Gehazi indicates that the incident occurred while Gehazi was still the servant of Elisha, before his dismissal because of his theft and deceit at the time of Naaman’s visit.

All the great things. The life stories of Elijah and Elisha are full of many interesting incidents and have a touching and dramatic appeal. Both king and people would be interested in hearing the accounts of the remarkable deeds of these prophets of God. Undoubtedly the stories were told and retold in palace and cottage, in the land of Israel and in countries abroad. Reduced to writing, they were collected and brought into the sacred record of the Hebrews, for our encouragement and enlightenment in this modern age. What God did then He is able and willing to do again today. The narratives that interested men in ancient times are the narratives that interest and inspire us today. The God of Elisha is still performing miracles of grace through His chosen servants in all parts of the earth. No stories ever fall upon mortal ears with greater interest and more soul-stirring power than those that tell how God works through His human agents His mighty wonders to perform.

5. As he was telling. At the dramatic moment when Gehazi was telling the king how the Shunammite woman’s son had been restored from death to life, the woman herself came in. Incidents such as this do not just happen. God lives and has a part in the daily affairs of His children on earth. Guardian angels are ever at work to protect and direct the steps of those under their charge into pathways of success and blessing. The same Lord who spoke through Elisha worked through His angel messengers to direct the woman of Shunem to the palace of the king at exactly the right moment, when her plea would prove most effective.

6. A certain officer. Heb. *saris*, literally, “eunuch.” Men of this type usually cared for the women of Eastern kings (Esther 2:3, 14, 15; 4:5 [translated “chamberlain”]; 2 Kings 9:32). It would be proper for an officer such as this to accompany the woman and see that her interests were properly taken care of.

All the fruits. Not only was the property to be restored to the woman, but she was also to be recompensed for all the produce of the land that was rightfully hers during the years of her absence and for which she had evidently received no return.

7. Elisha came to Damascus. Damascus was the capital of the king who not long before had sought him to take his life (2 Kings 6:8–15). Whether he would be treated kindly while in Damascus, or whether the king of Syria would again seek his life, was not certain. Elisha had some claims on Benhadad’s favor, for he had healed Naaman of his leprosy and had also been responsible for the release of the Syrian forces that had fallen into the hands of Joram (ch. 6:22). On the other hand, it was Elisha who had been responsible for baffling the plans of Benhadad against Joram ch. 6:9–12), and it was he who had foretold the inglorious departure of the Syrian armies at the siege of Samaria (ch. 7:1–7). But regardless of what the attitude of the king of Syria might be, Elisha went to the capital of Syria. The interests of the work of the Lord always came before his own convenience or safety.

The man of God. Doubtless all Syria knew Elisha as the one who had healed Naaman of his leprosy. When Benhadad was sick and Elisha happened to be in the city, it would

be only natural that news of his presence would be carried to the king, that he also might call on this man of God.

8. Hazael. Evidently an important functionary in the Syrian court. The high regard in which he was held by the king is indicated by the fact that Benhadad entrusted him with the important task of making contact with Elisha regarding his recovery.

Take a present. It was customary in those days to take a present when consulting a prophet (Num. 22:7; 1 Sam. 9:7; 1 Kings 14:2, 3; 2 Kings 5:5).

Enquire of the Lord. This is an amazing command to come from the king of Syria, and it is a remarkable testimony to the success of Elisha's mission. Elisha had the privilege of seeing a ruler of a nation the Hebrews regarded as heathen come to acknowledge him as a man of God and to request of him an inquiry of Jehovah. In giving the command to Hazael, the king of Syria was bearing witness before his people of his interest in the God of the Hebrews. He was also letting his nation know that he no longer regarded the gods of Syria alone as supreme.

This kind of testimony, had the children of Israel had been faithful to their mission, might have come from the rulers of many of the nations of earth. It was the original purpose of God that the Hebrews should be as a light set upon a hill, a light that was to shine forth to the ends of the world and dispel the darkness and ignorance that had come into the hearts of men. If there had been more Elishas, there might have been more kings, like Benhadad, testifying to God's greatness. If there had been more of faith and obedience in Israel, there would have been more of faith and hope in the world. The failure of Israel involved the failure and ruin of the nations about them. The salvation of Israel might have effected the salvation of many in the world.

Shall I recover? God alone could answer Benhadad's question. The king knew that if he inquired of the priests and prophets of Syria, he would not receive a reliable answer. The conduct of the king of Syria in addressing such an inquiry to the God of Israel is to be contrasted with the conduct of Ahaziah only a few years before, who inquired of "Baal-zebub the god of Ekron" as to whether he would recover from his disease (ch. 1:2). For that shameful act the king of Israel was severely rebuked by the prophet Elijah and told that he would die (ch. 1:4). Ahaziah was a contemporary of Benhadad, and it may have been that word as to what had occurred in Israel had reached the ears of the Syrian king. Benhadad's inquiry of Elisha was, of course, more than an inquiry; it was an invitation to the prophet of Israel to do for the king what he had done for Naaman.

9. So Hazael went. This was a marked act of deference and shows the esteem in which Elisha was held at this time in an enemy land. The prophet had at this time taken up his abode somewhere within or near Damascus, and it was to this place that Hazael was sent.

Every good thing. Damascus was in those days an important trading center and had in it some of the greatest treasures of the East. Among its wares might be listed beautiful vessels of brass, silver, and gold, rich brocaded robes of silk and satin, rare and delicious foods, jewels of great wealth and beauty, and articles of furniture of fragrant and costly woods.

Forty camels' burden. The East was given to ostentation and display, and the king would probably wish to make every possible show of the magnificent gift being offered the prophet. Forty camels loaded with their precious wares and parading slowly through the streets would make a great impression upon the people and would at once reveal to

the citizens the generosity and wealth of their king as well as the esteem in which the prophet was held.

Thy son Ben-hadad. This was a term of respect, similar to the expression “father” used by disciples when addressing their teachers (ch. 2:12), and servants their lords (ch. 5:13). Joram used this term toward Elisha (ch. 6:21) on an occasion when he had for Elisha a feeling of the highest respect and the deepest regard. It was thus that Joash addressed Elisha at the time of the prophet’s last illness (ch. 13:14). Benhadad had no doubt instructed Hazael to employ such a term in addressing the prophet in order to reveal to Elisha the high regard in which he was held.

10. Thou mayest certainly recover. The Hebrew text contains a negative. Thus the passage may be translated, “Thou shalt definitely not recover,” though with some difficulties of Hebrew construction. The sentence has been corrected in the margin of the Hebrew Bible to read, “Thou shalt surely recover.” The alteration was effected by changing the Hebrew negative *lo’* to *lo*, “unto him.” All the ancient versions and a number of Hebrew manuscripts agree with this marginal reading. Thus it seems necessary to account in some way for the contradiction between this statement and the immediately following prediction, “He shall surely die.” Several explanations have been offered; the following appears the most reasonable: Elisha was giving the king assurance that his sickness was not unto death. The disease itself was not fatal, and as far as that was concerned he would certainly live. That is the message Hazael was directed to take back to Benhadad. The question the king had asked was whether he would recover from his disease, and on that point the answer was clear—his disease was not such that it would bring about his death—he could live.

11. Until he was ashamed. Elisha seems to have looked Hazael squarely in the face and kept his eyes fastened upon him. Whether Hazael had previously cherished secret ambitions to sit on his master’s throne is not known. If he had, he may have suspected that Elisha was now reading his inmost thoughts.

12. I know the evil. The Lord knew better what Hazael would do in the future than did Hazael himself. A man seldom plans aforetime all the dark, foul deeds of which he at times becomes guilty. One evil thought leads to another, and one wicked deed leads to another still more wicked, until the one who consents to walk in the pathway of evil finds himself sinking to depths of iniquity he never would have planned for himself or have thought possible.

Dash their children. The future king of Syria, in the bitterness and hate that would develop within his soul, would engage in the foulest crimes against the people of Israel. Men at peace do not understand the cruelties and horrors of which they may become capable when they turn to war. The evils enumerated by Elisha were not strange to the nations of the East when these nations gave themselves over to the lusts of battle (see 2 Kings 15:16; Hosea 10:14; 13:16; Amos 1:3, 13).

13. A dog? Signifying one who is low, or contemptible (see 1 Sam. 17:43; 24:14; 2 Sam. 3:8; 9:8; 16:9). Hazael is either expressing extreme humility or is assuming a tone of offended innocence. He appears to be surprised and highly shocked. Perhaps he had already plotted his future evil course, but at the moment he would not have plotted all the evil of which in time he would become guilty. When a man first embarks upon a course of evil he would be highly shocked were he told what the ultimate outcome of his course will be.

14. Surely recover. Hazael presumably repeated the message as directed. He did not add that the Lord had revealed that Benhadad would surely die.

15. Took a thick cloth. Probably the coverlet that was at the head of the bed. He spread it on Benhadad's face, thus suffocating him. Undoubtedly this was done in such a way as to make it appear accidental, or as if the king had died a natural death.

16. Fifth year of Joram. For the chronology of the reign of Joram of Israel see pp. 77, 81, 145, 150.

Jehoram. For the joint reign of Jehoram of Judah with his father Jehoshaphat see on chs. 1:17; 3:1. The history of the kingdom of Judah is here resumed from 1 Kings 22:50, where the death of Jehoshaphat was mentioned.

17. Eight years. For this period, also for the method of reckoning, see pp. 148, 150.

18. Of the kings of Israel. There are many indications that Judah was at this time closely allied to the nation of Israel and was walking in the ways of its northern neighbor. One indication is the inferred adoption of Israel's method of chronological reckoning (see on ch. 9:29).

The daughter of Ahab. This was Athaliah (v. 26). The marriage of Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, to Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat, served to seal an alliance between the two nations (2 Chron. 18:1). Such marriages between the reigning houses of nations that entered into alliance with each other were common in the ancient East. Judah gained for herself little but trouble by this marriage and alliance. Athaliah was a woman of the same stamp as her parents and was to bring to Judah much trouble before her death. Under the alliance between the two nations Jehoshaphat joined forces with Ahab in Ahab's war against Syria (1 Kings 22:4, 29; he joined with Ahab's son Ahaziah in the making of ships at Ezion-geber (2 Chron. 20:35, 36), and joined Joram in war against Moab (2 Kings 3:7).

He did evil. This is the record that has thus far been given for the kings of Israel, but now Judah also was walking in the evil ways of its northern neighbor. When Jehoram came to the throne he slew all his brothers, to whom his father had given great treasures of silver and gold and fortified cities (2 Chron. 21:3, 4), and introduced gross forms of idolatry (2 Chron. 21:11).

19. For David. See on 1 Kings 11:36. Through the posterity of David, the light that God had given him was to continue to shine through all the ages. Wicked descendants like Jehoram all but extinguished the light.

20. Edom revolted. The Lord did not at this time allow the nation of Judah to perish, nor did He allow the dynasty of David to come to an end, yet because of its apostasy, Judah was permitted to suffer a measure of affliction. The Edomites, who had been subject to Judah for a century and a half, made an endeavor during Jehoram's reign to secure their independence. When God established Israel in Palestine He planned that eventually Jerusalem should become the capital of the entire earth, which would be one nation and people, a united, happy, and peaceful brotherhood, one in the worship of the God of heaven (see COL 290; DA 577). But instead of letting the light of truth shine forth to others, they absorbed the darkness of the nations that surrounded them.

Made a king. They evidently overthrew the government of the previous king, who held his crown from Judah, and chose for themselves a new and independent sovereign who terminated the payment of tribute to Judah. It was David who had made Edom tributary to himself (2 Sam. 8:14). At the time of Solomon, Edom must have continued in

a state of vassalage, for Solomon had a navy at Ezion-geber on the southern borders of Edom (1 Kings 9:26), and this situation continued throughout the reign of Jehoshaphat (1 Kings 22:47, 48).

21. Joram. This is an abbreviated form of the name Jehoram, and occurs in this form here and in vs. 23 and 24. In vs. 16, 25, 28, and 29 this is also the form employed for the contemporary king of Israel (v. 8). In ch. 1:17 and 2 Chron. 22:6 both kings are called Jehoram, and in 2 Chron. 22:5 the king of Israel is known both as Joram and also Jehoram (see note on p. 78).

Zair. This name occurs only here in the Bible. Its exact location is not known today.

All the chariots. It would be difficult to penetrate far into Edomite territory with a large force of chariots. Jehoram probably proceeded south only to the Edomite border, where the hostile forces of Edom had gathered.

Smote the Edomites. There is some difficulty in translating the Hebrew of this verse. The meaning seems to be that the king and his chariots smote the Edomites, who had surrounded them. Under cover of darkness the Edomites had advanced against the forces of Judah and finally had them surrounded. This being discovered, the chariots were able to fight their way through the enemy to safety.

Into their tents. That is, they fled home. For the meaning of the expression, “into their tents,” or “to their tents,” see 2 Sam. 20:1; 1 Kings 8:66. It was a defeat for the Hebrews, who were put to flight by the enemy and forced to return to their homes without having achieved their objective of putting down the revolt. Edom by its revolt succeeded in gaining its independence.

22. Unto this day. Up to the time of the writing of this phrase, Judah had not succeeded in bringing Edom back under its control. Edom seems to have continued as an independent state till the time of John Hyrcanus (134–104 B.C.), who once more reduced it to vassalage.

Libnah. A city 9 1/2 mi. (15.2 km.) north of Lachish (Joshua 10:29–31), and probably to be identified with *Tell eṣ Ṣâfi*, which is 23 1/2 mi. (37.6 km.) west by south of Jerusalem. Probably the inhabitants of Libnah were assisted in their revolt by attacks of the Philistines against Judah at this time (2 Chron. 21:16, 17).

24. Joram slept. On the circumstances of his death see 2 Chron. 21:12–19.

In the city of David. In 2 Chron. 21:20 it is stated that he was buried in the City of David but not in the sepulchers of the kings. It has been suggested that the royal sepulchers were under the control of a body of faithful priests who refused Jehoram interment there because of his evil ways.

Ahaziah. The name means “Jehovah has taken,” or “possession of Jehovah.” By a rearrangement of its parts the name becomes Jehoahaz, which Ahaziah is sometimes called (2 Chron. 21:17). In 2 Chron. 22:6 the name is given as Azariah, although a number of Hebrew manuscripts retain the name Ahaziah in that verse.

25. Twelfth year of Joram. Elsewhere the accession of Ahaziah is said to have taken place in the 11th year of Joram. Both statements are correct. For an explanation of the apparent discrepancy, see on ch. 9:29.

Son of Jehoram. According to 2 Chron. 21:17 to 22:1, Ahaziah was the youngest son of Jehoram, all of his elder sons having been slain in an enemy attack on the king’s camp. He bore the same name as his uncle Ahaziah, son of Ahab, then crown prince in the nation of Israel, his mother being Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel (2 Kings 8:18,

27). Jehoram probably had other wives besides Athaliah who may have been the mothers of his elder sons.

26. Daughter of Omri. Athaliah is called the daughter of Ahab (v. 18). Ahab was the son of Omri (1 Kings 16:28). Hence Athaliah was really the granddaughter of Omri. The terms “son” and “daughter” were used by the Hebrews for any descendants, no matter how remote. Christ was the “son of David,” and David was the “son of Abraham” (Matt. 1:1). Athaliah was here called the daughter of Omri because of the important position of Omri in Israelite history. He was the founder of the most important dynasty of Israelite kings. Wicked though these kings were, they were energetic rulers, who did much to make Israel a strong and important nation in the East. The Assyrians termed the country of Israel “Omri-land,” and even Jehu, who destroyed the dynasty of Omri, was termed by them the “son of Omri.”

27. In the way. According to 2 Chron. 22:3 his mother Athaliah was “his counsellor to do wickedly.” Evidently the king was almost completely under the influence of his strong-willed mother.

28. Went with Joram. The alliance between Israel and Judah was still in effect at this time, and Ahaziah would thus be expected to accompany his uncle on this campaign. In consideration of this alliance Jehoshaphat had gone with Ahab against Syria (1 Kings 22:29) and with Joram against Moab (2 Kings 3:7, 9).

Against Hazael. The wars between Israel and Syria, so frequent during the reign of Benhadad, continued during the reign of Hazael. At this time it was Israel that was on the offensive against Syria. Israel had suffered much at the hands of Benhadad, and was doubtless seeking the opportunity to even the score. A change in rulers in countries of the ancient East was frequently the signal for a series of wars; enemies would seek to attack before a new king had time to consolidate his position. Hazael is mentioned in an Aramaic inscription from Hamath in the same form as the Bible spells the name, also on ivory plaques which once served as decorations for the king’s bed. These plaques were found during the excavation of the north Syrian site known as *Arslan Tash*. In Assyrian documents the name appears in the form *Haza’ilu*.

Hazael had been seriously involved in a war with Shalmaneser III of Assyria. According to the Assyrian accounts Hazael was roundly defeated in this struggle, suffering the loss of 16,000 of his men, 1,131 chariots, 470 cavalry horses, as well as his camp. Shalmaneser relates how Hazael fled from him in order to save his life, and was shut up in his royal city Damascus. The country outside the capital was devastated as far south as the Hauran at the northern borders of Gilead, whereupon the Assyrian king made his departure for the seacoast and received tribute of Tyre and Sidon. Shalmaneser launched this attack in the 18th year of his reign, 841 B.C. That was the year in which Ahaziah ruled in Judah, and the year when Joram of Israel made his attack on Ramoth-gilead (see p. 82). After the serious reverse that Hazael had suffered at the hands of Shalmaneser, the moment would be opportune for Joram to bring Ramoth-gilead back under Israelite control. It was in the endeavor to take that stronghold some years before that Ahab lost his life (1 Kings 22:3–37).

Wounded Joram. Despite the wounds the siege nevertheless was successful, for Ramoth-gilead fell into Israelite hands (ch. 9:1, 4, 14, 15).

29. In Jezreel. Ahab had one of his palaces at Jezreel (1 Kings 18:45; 21:1), which Joram apparently continued to maintain as a rural retreat.

To see Joram. Ahaziah probably remained at Ramoth-gilead for a time after the wounding of Joram. Later, possibly after the city had been taken, he made his way to Jezreel to visit his wounded uncle. This visit led to his own death (2 Kings 9:27).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

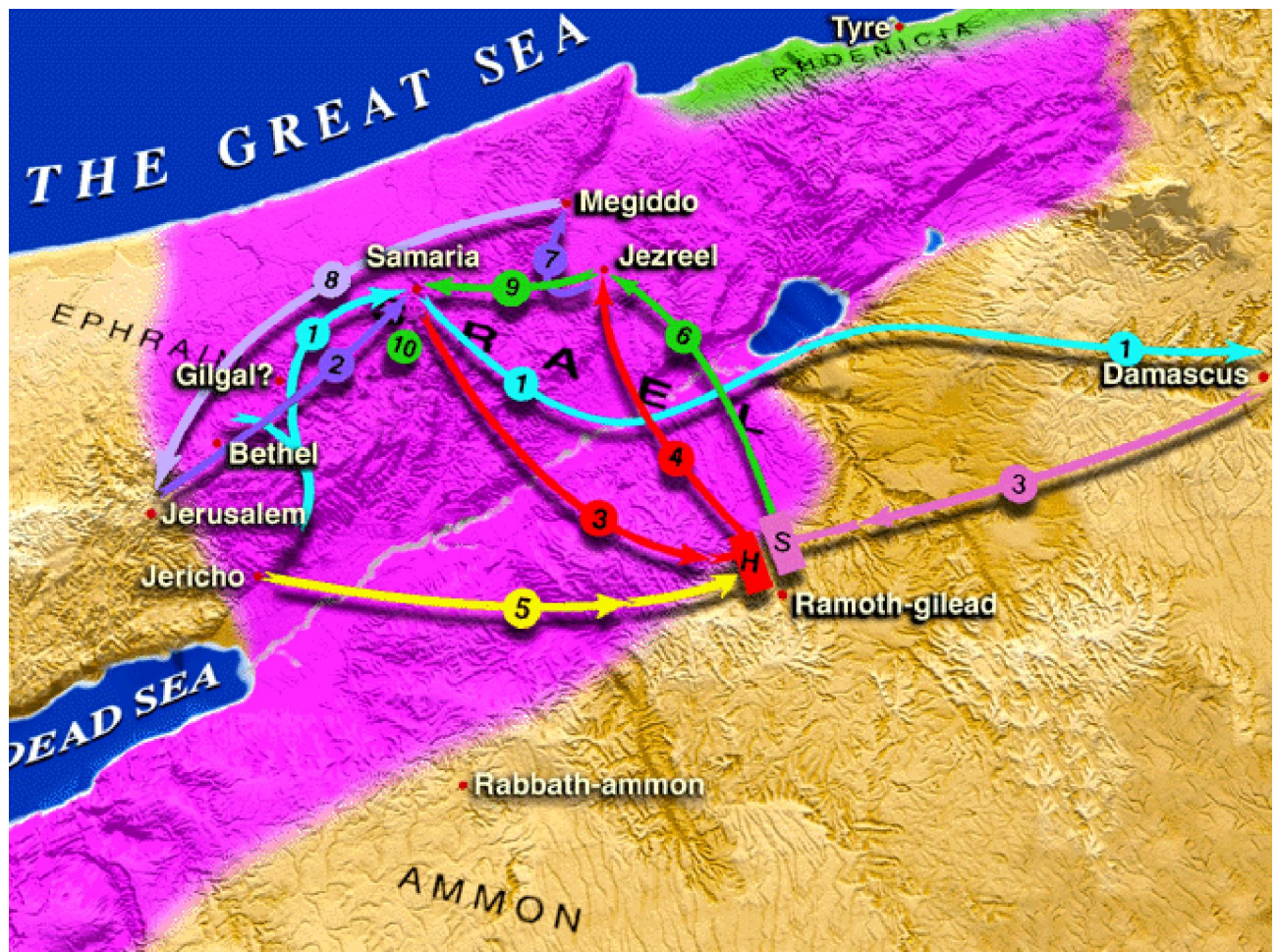
7–10PK 255

13 4T 90, 492

24–27PK 214

Overthrow of the House of Omri

4



CHAPTER 9

1 Elisha sendeth a young prophet with instructions to anoint Jehu at Ramoth-gilead. 4 The prophet having done his message fleeth. 11 Jehu, being made king by the soldiers, killeth Joram in the field of Naboth. 27 Ahaziah is slain at Gur, and buried at Jerusalem. 30 Proud Jezebel is thrown down out of a window, and eaten by dogs.

⁴Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (2 Ki 6:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

1. Elisha the prophet. The narratives concerning Elisha were interrupted in ch. 8:16 with the account of Jehoram's reign in Judah and that of his son Ahaziah. Now the record goes back once more to Elisha. The question may be raised: After the long account of the work of the prophet (chs. 2:12 to 8:15), why did not the narrative continue to the end of Elisha's career? The answer is that the book of Kings is essentially a record of the kings of Israel and Judah arranged in chronological order. The incidents of Elijah and Elisha, though important, are inserted into the record of the kings. The present incident concerning Elisha fits into the closing days of the lives of Ahaziah and Joram, and it is into the accounts of the reigns of these kings that this incident is interwoven.

One of the children. Elisha now had associated with him a number of prophet-disciples who were constantly employed assisting him in the carrying out of his many responsibilities. The identity of this man is not known. Rashi, a Jewish scholar of the 11th century, says it was Jonah, who is mentioned in ch. 14:25 as exercising his prophetic office during the reign of Jeroboam II. But that is hardly likely, for Jeroboam did not begin to reign till some 50 years later. There is no foundation to the rabbinical supposition that Jonah was the messenger here involved.

Box. Rather "flask" or "vial" (see 1 Sam. 10:1). Oils and ointments were in those days carried in jars made of earthenware, stone, or glass, many such having been found in Egypt and Mesopotamia.

Ramoth-gilead. The king of Israel had just been wounded in the siege of Ramoth-gilead and had returned to Jezreel. Thus far there has been no mention in the narrative as to whether the siege was successful, but the sequel so indicates.

2. Jehu. The Scriptural record gives no details as to Jehu's ancestry or the city of his origin other than this statement that he was the son of Jehoshaphat. He is referred to several times in the Assyrian records. Shalmaneser III, in an annal fragment from the 18th year of his reign (generally accepted as 841 B.C.)—the same annal entry in which he mentions the defeat of Hazael—also mentions receiving tribute from *Iaua mâr Humri*, or "Jehu son of Omri." This inscription, when taken together with the inscription from Shalmaneser's 6th year (see pp. 81, 159), when the Assyrian king fought Ahab at the battle of Qarqar, enables us to synchronize with Assyrian history not only the last year of Ahab's reign but also the year of Joram's death in Israel and the accession of Jehu.

His brethren. That is, his fellows or companions, the officers associated with him (see v. 5).

Carry him. Literally, "cause him to enter." The messenger was to conduct Jehu to another room, where he might commune with him in secret.

An inner chamber. Literally, "a chamber within a chamber" (see 1 Kings 20:30, and 22:25). Not necessarily a secret, but a private, chamber, where the messenger could commune with Jehu alone.

3. Pour it on his head. The commission to anoint Jehu as king had originally been given to Elijah at the same time that he was commissioned to anoint Elisha as his successor (see on 1 Kings 19:16).

Flee. The whole transaction was to be carried out quickly and in secret. With his mission fulfilled, the young prophet was immediately to make his departure, not waiting for either interrogation or possible reward.

4. The young man. The LXX and the Syriac have this expression only once.

5. Were sitting. Probably in the court, for according to the next verse Jehu, upon being informed that the message was for him, “went into the house.”

Jehu said. Evidently Jehu was in charge of the gathering. He was now the commander of the forces of Israel. At the time of the king’s departure from Ramoth-gilead, the city may not yet have fallen, for fighting was still in progress. The king may have used his wound as a pretext to get away from the army and avoid the rigors and dangers of battle. Jehu continued to press the siege and ultimately succeeded in capturing the city. Throughout Israel he would be regarded as a national hero.

6. Of Israel. God still acknowledged the nation of Israel as His, and as its rightful Ruler He now selected its new king.

Anointed thee king. This was a definite commission by God. The time had come for a new king, who would put an end to the evils of the dynasty of Omri. It was an hour of opportunity as well as responsibility for the man who would now take the crown in Israel.

7. The house of Ahab. Joram was the son of Ahab, as was also Ahaziah, who had preceded Joram on the throne. The house of Ahab was now to be wiped out because of its iniquity.

Avenge the blood. No one may shed innocent blood with impunity. The Lord watches over His own, and will avenge His elect in His own way and at the time that He deems best. Man, in the narrowness of his vision, may not always understand why the day of retribution is delayed. In his impatience he may think that the Lord has forgotten and that the doers of evil will be allowed to continue in their wicked ways with impunity.

All the servants. This shows that more than the chosen prophets of God were involved in the general persecution conducted by the house of Ahab against the worshipers of the true God.

At the hand of Jezebel. Jezebel had been the primary instigator of the persecutions in Israel, but she could not have carried them out alone. If Jezebel was guilty before God, those who worked with her and who were moved by the same spirit were also guilty.

8. The whole house. The judgment upon the house of Ahab, in which the whole family was exterminated, may appear to be unusually severe, but only because of a failure to keep in mind certain facts in regard to God’s dealings with Israel. When God organized the theocratic state of Israel at Sinai, He instituted severe civil penalties. Strong discipline was necessary to effect a reasonable degree of moral rectitude. With the institution of the monarchy a new problem presented itself. Since the power of the king was absolute, there was no authority in the land to bring the crimes of the king to justice. In instances like these, God often became the executor of civil penalty. It was more dangerous to overlook the wrongdoing of the king than to pass by the evil deeds of one of the subjects. Because of the high position held by the king, the influence of his evil example was correspondingly great. Hence the penalty inflicted was frequently severe, as in the case of Ahab and his house, or in the case of David when 70,000 men died after David’s sin in numbering Israel (2 Sam. 24). But the severity of the judgment was dictated by the measures needed to check unbridled lawlessness.

I will cut off. The expression of this verse denotes completeness of inclusion. The words appear to have been in use among the Hebrews from the time of David (1 Sam. 25:22). When Jeroboam walked in the ways of evil, this was the expression that was used concerning his posterity, who would be cut off (1 Kings 14:10). When the house of Baasha perished, this again was the expression used (1 Kings 16:11). And when Naboth

had been slain and his vineyard appropriated, Elijah employed this expression against the descendants of Ahab, who were doomed to utter destruction (1 Kings 21:21). Now the prophet again employs the same words to indicate that the house of Ahab was to meet a miserable fate.

9. Like the house of Jeroboam. Both of these houses had completely perished. When Baasha smote the house of the first king of Israel, “he left not to Jeroboam any that breathed” (1 Kings 15:29), and when Zimri wiped out the house of Baasha, he left him “neither of his kinsfolks, nor of his friends” (1 Kings 16:11).

10. The dogs shall eat Jezebel. Elijah had foretold this terrible fate that would befall Israel’s wicked queen (1 Kings 21:23; 2 Kings 9:36, 37). The name of the wife of Ahab had become synonymous with iniquity. It was she who had led the people of God into the most shameful forms of idolatry and wickedness. Hers was a terrible guilt, and she was to meet a terrible doom. The punishment meted out to Jezebel was never to be forgotten, and was to bring up in the mind of the doer of evil a vivid realization of the fact that the fate of the transgressor is hard. In the lands of the Orient there are still numerous wild and half-starved dogs that are the scavengers of the countryside and that would devour the flesh of a corpse left out in the open.

In the portion of Jezreel. It was fitting that Jezebel should suffer there, at the scene of her evil deeds, where she had threatened Elijah with destruction (1 Kings 19:2) and where she had shed the innocent blood of Naboth for the sake of his vineyard (1 Kings 21:7–15).

11. Is all well? Literally, “Is it peace?” The same question also appears in vs. 17, 18, 19 and 22. The sudden appearance of the messenger, his taking Jehu aside by himself for a secret interview, and his hasty departure raised questions concerning the purpose of the visit. Everyone knew that the prophetic messenger had not come on some ordinary errand. Had he brought a message of good or of ill? Was there some sudden crisis that demanded the services of the army elsewhere?

Mad fellow. Literally, “madman,” from the verb “to be mad.” This term was used contemptuously, as in Jer. 29:26 (cf. Hosea 9:7).

Ye know the man. These words suggest that Jehu may have been suspicious that the officers were in on the whole plan to make him king.

12. It is false. No, they had not even guessed the prophet’s purpose, but they were eager to know. Why try to keep it a secret? Jehu might well reveal the matter to them, then and there. The Biblical record vividly portrays the excited curiosity of the officers concerning the important message they knew had just been given the commanding general of the armies of Israel.

13. Put it under him. The revelation of the prophetic message produced an immediate change in the relationships of the men gathered in Jehu’s headquarters. Before the contents of the message were known, they were all comrades together in arms, fellow officers in the service of their king. Now, suddenly, one of them stood apart from the rest—he was king and the others were his subjects. One was to receive homage, the others were to pay their respects to their king. So the officers immediately took off their outer garments and threw them down on the ground as a carpet for Jehu to walk on—a fitting tribute to the man whom the Lord had set up as king.

Top. Heb. *gerem*. Literally, “bone,” or “strength.” The exact meaning of the phrase that has here been translated as “top of the stairs,” is not clear, but it may refer to some

architectural term, possibly a raised landing or platform at the head of the stairs. From the courtyard where the officers were gathered there may have been a stairway leading upward to a landing or platform that could well be improvised as a throne on which the new king might take his position before his subjects. The officers probably made a carpet of state out of their outer garments up the stairway and on the platform, so that the king might have a fitting eminence from which to receive the plaudits of his subjects.

Blew with trumpets. This was a recognized part of a coronation ceremony (see 2 Sam. 15:10; 1 Kings 1:39; 2 Kings 11:14).

Jehu is king. There seems to have been an immediate and joyful acceptance of the general as king. Jehu evidently was held in high esteem among his fellow officers; at the same time there may have been general dissatisfaction with Joram and the house of Omri.

14. Conspired against Joram. The former king was still alive and supposedly still ruling upon his throne. So the actions in which Jehu was taking a part were in reality conspiracy against Joram and the house of Omri and Ahab.

Joram had kept Ramoth-gilead. This is an important statement, because it shows definitely that the siege had been successful and that the city had come into Israelite hands. “Joram” should probably here be taken to stand not so much for the man as for the nation he ruled. If Joram left during the siege, Jehu had probably by now taken the city in the name of the king and was standing guard with the army of Israel, to prevent the Syrians from recapturing it.

Because of Hazael. Because Hazael certainly would do his best to retake the city at his earliest opportunity. Israel would therefore have to continue to stand guard against Hazael if Ramoth-gilead was to be retained under Israelite control.

15. To be healed. Having mentioned that Joram was holding Ramoth-gilead, the writer, to prevent a misconception, repeats what he has previously stated (ch. 8:29) about Joram’s personal return to Jezreel to be healed of the wounds he had received at the siege.

If it be your minds. Jehu is giving his first orders as king. Instead of being harsh and arbitrary he wants his men to know that their wishes are to be considered. If they deem it wise, and if they are with him in the present enterprise, then many they carry out his proposal.

Let none go forth. Should word regarding what had occurred get to Joram at Jezreel, things might go hard with the conspirators. The order again makes it clear that Ramoth-gilead was in Israelite hands, for if the city had been still under siege, there would have been no point in such directions as these.

16. Rode in a chariot. No time was to be lost. Jehu made every effort to get to Jezreel before anyone had had the opportunity of telling the king what had just taken place at Ramoth-gilead. He rode in a chariot, accompanied by a small group of men, but the army was left on guard in Gilead against any surprise attack by the Syrians.

Joram lay. Joram had not yet recovered from his wounds and was still confined to his bed at Jezreel. But the sequel shows that he could not have been too seriously ill, for he was well enough to enter his chariot and go out to meet Jehu (v. 21).

To see Joram. Both the king of Israel and the king of Judah were originally present at the siege of Ramoth-gilead (ch. 8:28). When Joram was wounded he took his departure for his country residence at Jezreel, and was soon followed by Ahaziah. If both kings left before the siege ended, this would have had a discouraging effect on the army, and would

probably be interpreted as indifference or cowardice. If, while Jehu and the army were undergoing the hardships and dangers of battle, the kings were taking their ease at the summer palace, this would explain the immediate and unrestrained enthusiasm with which Jehu was hailed as king.

17. Tower in Jezreel. The city of Jezreel was at the head of the Valley of Jezreel, down which the city looks to the Jordan. It was on a plain, but stood on the brow of a steep descent of 100 ft. (30.5 m.), with a view of the country all the way to the Jordan. To the west, there was a view across the Valley of Esdraelon to Carmel. The site, commanding this strategic location, was an admirable one for a fort. On the walls of Oriental cities there were often lofty gates or towers that gave a view of all the countryside in every direction. On the tower of Jezreel stood a sentinel to keep watch for any danger that might threaten. At the time of the approach of Jehu and his company, this watchman was at his post, faithfully performing his duty.

Spied the company. Far off in the distance a group of horsemen could be seen approaching. At that distance it was not clear who they might be, friends or foes, Israelites or Syrians. The watchman did not wait until he could make out the full particulars. That might be too late. As soon as he saw the company approaching he sent word to the king, so that the city might be in readiness for any eventualities. It should be noted that Jehu was not traveling alone; he had a company of men with him.

Is it peace? See on v. 11. It was a time of war. Ramoth-gilead had just been taken from the Syrians, and Hazael might certainly be expected to make an attempt to take it back. Moreover, the armies of Assyria were not far away. These were times when anything might happen. So the question, "Is it peace?" was of more than usual significance and certainly was more than a formal greeting.

18. Turn thee behind me. The messenger ascertained only too well that Jehu's mission was not one of peace, but he was to be given no opportunity to return and convey such a message to the king. Instead, he was ordered to fall to the rear while the men continued their advance.

Cometh not again. The watchman kept his eyes on the approaching group, seeking to discover whether their intentions were friendly or otherwise. The messenger whom Joram had sent was supposed to return with his report. When he failed to do so, the action might be regarded as an indication that the approaching group was not coming on a friendly mission. It was the province of the watchman to report what he saw, not to issue orders, and he immediately reported to the king that his messenger was not coming back.

20. The watchman told. Whatever may be said of the king, the watchman reacted with energy and promptness. He kept his eyes open for any sign that might give away the intentions of the advancing group. The failure of the second messenger to return was not a portent of good.

The driving of Jehu. Men are known by their actions. The characteristic by which Jehu was recognized, suggests that in general he may have been a man of driving energy, a man who thought and acted fast. What he did he probably did in haste and with dispatch and vigor. When he drove, he drove furiously. As a warrior, he was probably courageous, vigorous, and determined. It may have been this driving impulse of his life that brought him to the command of the armies of Israel. His characteristic furious driving now identified him long before his features could be distinguished.

21. Make ready. Joram was making preparations for his own death. A wiser person might have read more correctly the meaning of the signs that had been so clearly given and made ready the defense of the city, rather than ordering for himself a chariot to go out to meet the approaching enemy. It is evident that Joram was not as ill as his hasty departure seemed to indicate, or he would not have been in a position to go out to meet Jehu. It is also highly probable that he suspected no ill toward himself. He was anxious and concerned, but it may have been only regarding the state of affairs in Gilead.

Went out. Two kings went out to meet another—two went to their doom and one to his throne. The two kings went out unsuspecting and unarmed. In the city they would have had matters in their favor. They would have been protected by walls and probably had with them troops sufficient to take care of the crisis. After the long and furious journey from Ramoth-gilead, the horses of Jehu and his company were spent, and would hardly have been a match for the cavalry from Jezreel.

Against Jehu. Rather, “to meet Jehu.” The Hebrew word here translated “against” is from the root “to call,” “to meet,” and should be translated “against” only when the context demands it. The kings were probably unsuspectingly going as friends, expecting to meet a friend.

Naboth the Jezreelite. By this time Jehu had almost arrived at the city and the palace. Joram had time to go out only as far as the field Ahab had taken from Naboth. The title deeds for that field had been signed in blood. First it was the blood of Naboth that signed over that field to the house of Ahab, and now it was the blood of the house of Ahab that was to affix its signature (see on Ex. 20:5). This judgment upon Joram was in accord with the strict demands of justice. What could have been more fitting than that the house of Ahab should pay the price for the death of Naboth in that field of blood?

22. Is it peace, Jehu? Joram’s question may be understood as referring to the situation in Gilead. Was everything well there at the seat of the war?

What peace? Joram’s anxious question was met with the rough answer of Jehu. Israel’s future king was not a diplomat but a warrior. His words were brusque and direct. The very mention of peace by Joram stirred up in the soul of Jehu a tempest of wrath and brought down upon the head of the hapless king a torrent of denunciation more severe than would have come from the mouth of a prophet.

Whoredoms of thy mother. Whoredoms both in the spiritual sense of idolatries and faithlessness to God (1 Chron. 5:25; Jer. 3:3, 8; Eze. 16:15–43; 23:27–30; Hosea 2:2–10), and in a literal sense, since the idolatrous religions of Palestine were fertility cults, whose sacred rites involved the most flagrant forms of indecency and immorality (see Num. 25:1, 2; 1 Cor. 10:7, 8).

Her witchcrafts. Sorceries, consultations with evil spirits, the use of spells and charms, the telling of fortunes, and divination of many kinds were common in the religions of the ancient Orient (see 1 Sam. 28:3, 7–9; 2 Kings 1:2; 17:17; 2 Kings 21:3, 6; Dan. 2:2; Acts 16:16). God’s people were forbidden to have any part in such activities (Ex. 22:18; Lev. 19:26, 31; 20:6, 27; Deut. 18:10–12; 1 Chron. 10:13; Isa. 8:19).

23. There is treachery, O Ahaziah. The Hebrew phrase is shorter, consisting of only two words, “treachery, Ahaziah.” There was no time for a lengthy explanation. Joram shouted the warning message to his nephew as he whipped his horses round in flight for his life.

24. Drew a bow. Jehu was a trained soldier and thus had often used the bow in personal combat. This was one arrow he intended should not miss its mark or fail to accomplish its purpose.

Between his arms. That is, between his shoulders. Joram was fleeing and had his back to Jehu. He was struck in the back with such force that the arrow went through his body, coming out at the heart.

He sunk down. He might have died in battle, honorably and gloriously, fighting against his country's enemy. But he died from the arrow of one who had been his trusted officer and friend. Years before, Elijah had spoken: "It shall come to pass, that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay" (1 Kings 19:17). No man for whom divine judgment has been decreed can hope to escape the sword of justice (see Deut. 32:43; Rom. 12:19). The wicked did not in ancient times, and the world does not now, believe that the Lord means what He says, but as long as justice demands that iniquity meet its just deserts, so long will the Lord's decrees against evildoers be carried out (see on v. 8).

25. His captain. See on ch. 7:2.

Take up, and cast him. Jehu is taking upon himself the responsibility of avenging the innocent blood of Naboth. He knows the wickedness of Ahab and the crimes of Jezebel, and he knows that those crimes must be avenged in blood. In the field where Naboth had labored and for which his blood was shed, there he ordered that the dead body of the king be cast.

Rode together after Ahab. Both Jehu and Bidkar were veterans. They had been together in the army with Ahab, and had witnessed his exploits in war and his actions in times of peace. Both may have been ear witnesses of Elijah's bitter denunciation of the king when the prophet pronounced upon him the Lord's sentence of doom after the death of Naboth (1 Kings 21:19–24). At least they had a knowledge of it. The pronouncement probably made an indelible impression upon Jehu, for he knew that the divine sentence was just. Now both men were together again when the Lord's sentence was carried into execution by Joram's death.

Laid this burden upon him. That is, pronounced this oracle, or woe, against him. Compare the use of the word "burden" in Isa. 13:1; 15:1; 17:1; 19:1; 21:1; 22:1; 23:1; 30:6; Nahum 1:1; Hab. 1:1; Zech. 9:1; 12:1.

26. Surely I have seen yesterday. This is a formula used in an emphatic assertion or an oath. As certainly as the Lord saw the blood of Naboth, so certainly would He see to it that blood would be avenged.

Of his sons. This is the first mention of the death of the sons of Naboth together with the father. But in order for Ahab to have a clear title to the vineyard, it was necessary to put the sons out of the way. If they had been allowed to live, the king would never have possessed the vineyard unchallenged. Hence we can understand how Jezebel, in putting Naboth to death, would destroy his family with him. The death of the innocent children with the death of the equally guiltless father made the crime of Ahab and Jezebel all the more outrageous.

Plat of ground. The same as "plot of ground."

27. He fled. Ahaziah would hardly stand idly by while Joram was being smitten and his body cast into the vineyard of Naboth. He seems to have had more of a start from his pursuers than had Joram, for he was not immediately smitten.

The going up to Gur. An ascent, or a hill, near Ibleam. The name, Gur, occurs only here, and the exact site is not known. Ibleam is 8 mi. (12.8 km.) south by west from Jezreel, on the road to Samaria and Jerusalem. When pursued, Ahaziah would make it his first objective to reach Jerusalem, and this is the route he would take. The road from Jezreel at first winds along the plain of Esdraelon, but after a time begins to rise over the outlying spurs of the hills of Samaria. It was while Ahaziah's chariot was making its ascent up one of these slopes that his pursuers came close enough to wound him. Ibleam is now known as *Tell Bel 'ameh*.

Fled to Megiddo. The exact details of the narrative are not clear, for according to the record in Chronicles, Ahaziah was apprehended in Samaria and was brought before Jehu and slain (2 Chron. 22:9). The two accounts can be reconciled by considering the narrative in Kings to be a general outline, with the narrative in Chronicles providing added details. The sequence of events may be understood as follows: Ahaziah, after being wounded near Ibleam, changed his course of flight, choosing, instead of the mountainous terrain to the south, the level plain toward Megiddo. While at Megiddo he attempted an escape to the south, but was apprehended in Samaria and returned to Megiddo at the summons of Jehu, who had arrived there. Ahaziah then met his death by execution, a detail omitted in the briefer Kings' account.

28. To Jerusalem. Jehu permitted the body of the king of Judah to be taken back to the king's own capital for burial. It was not the Lord's purpose that the nation of Judah should be associated with its northern neighbor in close alliance. Jehoshaphat was rebuked by the prophet for giving his assistance to Ahab against Benhadad (2 Chron. 19:2). The conduct of Ahaziah in assisting Joram in war against Hazael was also reprehensible in the eyes of God (2 Chron. 22:4, 5). For such assistance Ahaziah paid with his life.

With his fathers. Under usual circumstances the wicked king Ahaziah would probably not have been given burial in the sepulchers of the kings in the City of David. This honor was accorded him, despite his connection with the house of Ahab, because of his descent from the good king Jehoshaphat, "because, said they, he is the son of Jehoshaphat, who sought the Lord with all his heart" (2 Chron. 22:9).

29. The eleventh year of Joram. This verse is a postscript to the record of Ahaziah's reign, the final item of which is recorded in the previous verse. In presenting the record of a king, the first detail to be given is the year in which he came to the throne, in terms of the year of reign of the ruling monarch in the neighboring nation, and that is given in ch. 8:25. There, however, the beginning of Ahaziah's reign is given as the 12th year of Joram's reign in Israel, and here it is the 11th year. The difference in these two figures is explained on the assumption that at this period Judah, in its policy of cooperation with the northern kingdom, adopted Israel's system of chronological reckoning, which was different from Judah's by one year. The record of ch. 8:25 is evidently given according to the new system, by which the year in which a king came to the throne was called his first year. The 12th year of Joram would be the 11th year according to the system previously in use, by which a king's "first year" was his first full calendar year, that following the one in which he ascended the throne (see pp. 138, 139; cf. p. 148).

30. Jezebel heard of it. For Jezebel the final hour of doom had come, and she knew it. Having had word of the death of the two kings, her son and grandson, she well knew that

her turn was next. She must prepare for her last moment on earth. And what a preparation this evil woman made!

She painted her face. Literally, “she put [treated] her eyes with antimony.” From the earliest times Oriental women used cosmetics for painting their eyebrows and their eyelashes (see Jer. 4:30 and Eze. 23:40).

Tired her head. She adorned her head with a “tire,” or headdress (see Isa. 3:18), literally, she “made good [beautiful] her head.” She was defiant and unrepentant to the last. She decked herself in all her ornaments and put on her most stately attire. But her outward adorning was to avail her nothing, either before Jehu or before the judgment bar of God. Before that tribunal all stand revealed as they really are. Powder and paint do not cover up the inner corruption of the heart, nor do silks and satins hide the ugly stains of sin upon the soul. Jezebel was corrupt within in spite of all her efforts at outward beautification. God looks at the heart and asks for inward adorning rather than outward (1 Peter 3:3, 4). In view of her dark record of sin, Jezebel might well have put on sackcloth and sat in ashes. But her proud spirit refused to be humbled and her heart of stone would not be moved.

Looked out. The window was probably one in her private quarters, overlooking an inner court. Her attitude appears to have been haughty and imperious as she took her position at her window to look down in bitter defiance at the rebel who was even then entering the palace gates.

31. Had Zimri peace, who slew his master? Literally, “Is it peace, Zimri, killer of his master?” Zimri was the exterminator of the house of Baasha (1 Kings 16:8–13), but he reigned only seven days. At the end of that period he perished in the struggle with his successor. To him there was no peace. The text as it stands makes Jezebel refer to this ill-fated attempt of Zimri, as if in warning to Jehu. The literal translation, however, conveys a different thought. It makes Jezebel address Jehu as Zimri, as if to say, tauntingly, “Peace, you Zimri, murderer of your master?”

32. Who is on my side? who? The Hebrew is much briefer and more to the point, *mi’itti mi*, “Who with me, who?” The expression, in its brevity and impetuosity, appears characteristic of Jehu. He had dashed into the courtyard, heard the taunting, contemptuous greeting of Jezebel, and wanted the whole thing over with in a hurry—quicker than it would take for him to enter the building and seize the vile woman before him.

Eunuchs. Jezebel seems to have been the type of woman who was hated, even by those most closely associated with her. The eunuchs up till that moment had been accustomed to crouch in servile dread before her, ready to carry out her every whim. But they evidently had little respect for her and no love. They probably despised her and were loyal to her only as long as it was to their own interest. When the opportunity arose, they were ready to turn upon their former tyrant. They probably welcomed a change of administration. At least they hoped thus to secure the favor of their new master.

33. Throw her down. The proud, domineering, tyrannical woman was to perish for her crimes. Such was the demand of justice and such was the decree of God. It was a fitting end to her insolence and arrogance. Thrones resting on violence and corruption will not long endure.

Trode her under foot. To show for her his utter contempt as she was in her dying agonies. The decked and painted body, which had been so ignominiously cast out of the

window, had its last spark of life crushed out by the horses and chariot wheels of the furious avenger, with her royal but tainted blood splashing against the palace wall and staining the horses' feet. Jezebel did not die the death of a queen, but of the contemptible creature she had proved herself to be. She had hated righteousness, and now her nation hated her. She had despised God, and today the world looks back upon her with horror and contempt.

Our condemnation of Jezebel should not lead us to approve, even by our silence, the barbaric course that Jehu followed in dealing with her. The only extenuation for his method of executing judgment on her is that he lived in a violent age. Violence begets violence.

34. *He did eat and drink.* The palace that once was Ahab's belonged to his seed no longer, for Jehu now was king. Leaving the mangled body of the queen in the courtyard outside, Jehu entered the banquet hall.

This cursed woman. Jehu was calling to mind that this woman had been cursed by God (1 Kings 21:23).

A king's daughter. Hardened warrior though he was, Jehu felt in his heart a touch of sympathy and respect for the office of royalty. She had been born the daughter of a king, of Ethbaal, priest and king of Sidon (1 Kings 16:31), but she had died the death of a foul creature. Jehu now was willing that she at least be given a decent burial as would befit the princess she once had been.

35. *Than the skull.* The dogs of Jezreel had made for Jezebel a living tomb. The body of the queen had become food for the half-wild dogs of the city. The prophecy of Elijah had been fulfilled (1 Kings 21:23), justice had been satisfied, and Naboth had been avenged for Jezebel's crime against him.

36. *The word of the Lord.* This seems to be the fuller prophecy of which 1 Kings 21:23 is an abbreviation.

37. *They shall not say.* This may mean that the identity of her remains would be obliterated through the mutilation of her body or that Jezebel was to leave behind no sepulcher. If the latter be the meaning, her remains were to disappear utterly from the face of the earth, and people of future generations would not be able to point to her tomb and say that it was there where the once proud queen was buried. When she died only the memory of her evil would remain.

The frightful end of Jezebel should teach us the transitoriness and nothingness of human might and glory. All such things are of dust and to dust they will return. Her doom calls for all workers of iniquity to hear the message of God: "Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness" (Jer. 22:13).

Jezebel became a type of the base iniquity that the professed children of God would permit to come into their ranks to debase and defile, and solemn warnings were given of what the resultant judgments would be (Rev. 2:20-23).

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CHAPTER 10

1 *Jehu, by his letters, causeth seventy of Ahab's children to be beheaded.* 8 *He excuseth the fact by the prophecy of Elijah.* 12 *At the shearing house he slayeth two and forty of*

Ahaziah's brethren. 15 He taketh Jehonadab into his company. 18 By subtilty he destroyeth all the worshippers of Baal. 29 Jehu followeth Jeroboam's sins. 32 Hazael oppresseth Israel. 34 Jehoahaz succeedeth Jehu.

1. Seventy sons. Large though this number is, it would not be impossible in a country where polygamy was practiced. But the word “sons” is here employed in the usual Hebrew sense of the term, “descendants.” Ahab had been dead 12 years and had left a large posterity.

Jehu wrote letters. Jehu was not only courageous but crafty. In the situation in which he found himself he must use not only force but guile. At the moment he had with him at Jezreel only a small force of men, the main part of the army having been left on guard at Ramoth-gilead. There was no telling what the outcome would be if Jehu himself went down to Samaria, the capital, where the bulk of Ahab's descendants lived. These men, alone, with their supporters, might well have been sufficient to overwhelm the new king with his present guard. So Jehu would first sound out the inclinations of the leading men at the capital by writing letters before making a personal visit. For “Jezreel” the LXX reads “Samaria.” The sense of the passage seems to require this reading. Jehu was already in Jezreel, and there seems to be no purpose in sending letters to the rulers of that city. There exists, of course, the probability that the princes of Jezreel were in Samaria on some mission and hence were included in the address. Since Jezreel was also a royal city, its princes would appropriately be numbered among those called upon to set up the new king.

For a comment on the ethical problems involved in many of the militant acts of those called by God to stamp out apostasy, see p. 199.

Them that brought up. Heb. *ha'omenim*, foster fathers. The word occurs in Num. 11:12 and Isa. 49:23, where it is translated as “nursing father.” They were of the nobles of Israel who acted as guardians over the members of the royal family and saw to it that they received a proper training, and who would be held accountable for the behavior of their wards.

2. Chariots and horses. Jehu is laying down a challenge to those in Samaria who might be expected to throw in their lot with the children of Joram and the house of Ahab. Since they are well equipped with arms, and protected by strong fortifications, and since it is only to be expected that they will fight to sustain the house of Ahab, let them now take up his challenge. Jehu was well known to them as one of the bravest and most capable generals, and he had under his command the best men of the nation. If they wanted to fight with him, let them do so.

3. Look even out the best. That is exactly what these men would be expected to do. Since Joram had been slain, the nobles who were the guardians of the princes would naturally select a successor for the throne. Jehu conveys the impression that that is exactly what he is looking for them to do and that that is the situation he is prepared to meet.

4. Exceedingly afraid. That is the effect Jehu was seeking to bring about and that is why he wrote the letter he did. He did not want war nor was he urging them to put up resistance. Rather, he was endeavoring to strike terror into their hearts and bring them over to his side without a show of force.

How then shall we stand? It was a good question—if the kings of Israel and of Judah had fallen before the might of Jehu, how could the nobles resist? Jehu, knowing the

temper of these men, reasoned that they would not have the courage to fight. Perhaps their luxury and avarice (see Isa. 28:1–7; Hosea 7:1–6; Amos 6:4–6; Micah 2:2; 7:2–6) unnerved them for the struggle. The bold and able soldier used his wit as well as his sword.

6. *If ye be mine.* If these men were with Jehu they were asked to show it not only with words but with deeds.

By to morrow this time. Jehu was a man who did things with dispatch. They had 24 hours in which to carry out his orders. Jezreel was 21 1/8 mi. (33.8 km.) from Samaria. Hence there was just enough time to carry the messages back and forth, and to have the young men put to death and their heads conveyed to Jezreel.

The king's sons. The posterity of the royal house. Some were sons of Joram, others were nephews—any one of whom might make a claim to the throne.

7. *Put their heads.* Decapitation is common in the Orient. The heads of the princes could be easily recognized and easily conveyed. Thus they would present positive proof to Jehu that the orders had been carried out and that there was no attempt at treachery.

8. *Entering in of the gate.* Heads of those executed are frequently placed on public exhibit in Eastern countries even today. Assyrian sculptures often show heaps of heads at the gates of cities. The object of such practices was, of course, to strike terror into the hearts of any who might think to resist.

9. *Ye be righteous.* The men of Jezreel were innocent of slaying any of the seed of Ahab, and Jehu publicly pronounced them so. He frankly confessed that it was he who had conspired against his master the king and had put him to death. But he also wanted to make it clear that he was not alone in what was going on—all he had done was to start something in which many were now having part. While Jehu was at Jezreel the leading men of Samaria had put to death all the royal seed; hence they were now participants with him in the move to rid the land of all the family of Ahab.

10. *Word of the Lord.* Through the prophet Elijah the Lord had foretold the utter downfall of Ahab and his house (1 Kings 21:19, 21, 29). Jehu was setting himself forth as the executioner of the decrees of God. So indeed he was. But the record reveals that he was also selfish, impetuous, unfeeling, and cruel. The fact that Jehu was used of Heaven for a special mission places no sanction upon all the deeds of his life. For his act of executing judgment upon the house of Ahab he received divine commendation (2 Kings 10:30).

11. *Slew all that remained.* The reference is not to the past but to a new campaign of slaughter. Feeling himself secure in his position, Jehu now proceeded to destroy all who had had any connection with the house of Ahab, immediate or remote.

His great men. All the high officials of the court, and all the most powerful and influential partisans of the crown throughout the land.

His kinsfolks. Rather, his friends or familiar acquaintances.

12. *The shearing house.* Heb. *beth-‘eqed haro‘im*, “house of binding of the shepherds.” *Beth-‘eqed* should possibly be given as a proper name, “Beth-eked,” and the last word translated, “of the Shepherds” (see RSV). The place is probably to be identified with the Beth-akad of Eusebius and Jerome, and with the modern *Beit Qad*, about 3 mi. (4.8 km.) east by north from *en-Gannim (Jenîn)*. It was probably a common meeting place for the shepherds of the neighborhood.

13. The brethren of Ahaziah. Not the actual brothers of the king, for these had been slain by the Arabs before Ahaziah came to the throne (2 Chron. 21:17; 22:1), but the sons of his brothers, as is made clear in 2 Chron. 22:8.

We go down to salute. The frankness of the answer given by these men indicates that they had as yet had no word of the events that had occurred at either Jezreel or Samaria. This shows the speed with which Jehu had carried through his measures against the throne. There seems to have been a close relationship between the royal families of Judah and Israel at this time, for such visits to be made back and forth. They had probably heard that Joram had sufficiently recovered from his wounds, and that a friendly visit was in order from his kinsfolk in the royal household of Judah.

14. Take them alive. Why the order first was given that they be taken alive before their being slain is not clear. Perhaps when they heard of the revolution and Jehu's slaughter of the royal family of Israel they made some effort at resistance and were then put to death. Through Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah and the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, these princes of Judah were related to the royal house of Israel, and were thus included in the "posterity" of Ahab, who, Elijah had prophesied, would perish (1 Kings 21:21).

15. Jehonadab. As Jehu made his departure from Beth-eked he met with Jehonadab, who, it seems, was then on his way to see him. Jehonadab is the son of Rechab mentioned in Jer. 35:6–10, who commanded his descendants to live an abstemious life by not drinking wine, building houses, planting vineyards or fields. They were to live in tents. Rechab belonged to the tribe of Kenites (1 Chron. 2:55), one of the ancient peoples of Palestine (Gen. 15:19), Moses' father-in-law in Midian was a Kenite (Judges 1:16), and so, at the time of the judges, was Heber, who lived in Galilee (Judges 4:11, 17). When Israel entered Palestine the Kenites settled in the Wilderness of Judah (Judges 1:16). At the time of Saul there were Kenites dwelling among the Amalekites, but they were spared by Saul because of the kindness shown by them to Israel at the time of the Exodus (1 Sam. 15:6). The Rechabites remained constant nomads, having habits much like those of the Arabs. Their leader Jehonadab seems to have sympathized strongly with Jehu and desired to give the countenance of his authority to the new regime.

Is thine heart right? What Jehu meant was, "Is your heart true to mine, as mine is to yours?" Jehu evidently was kindly disposed to Jehonadab and desired his friendship and support. This stern leader had probably become highly displeased with the wicked ways of the Israelite court and gladly gave his support to the new regime.

Give me thine hand. As to the significance of the giving of the hand as an act of fidelity see Eze. 17:18. In 1 Chron. 29:24 the Hebrew phrase which may be literally translated, "they gave the hand," is rendered, "submitted themselves."

Into the chariot. As a mark of particular favor and esteem. Jehu would be happy to have the support of this influential ascetic who must have been a man of some note in the kingdom at that time.

16. See my zeal. A man who in his heart is really devoted to the Lord does not need to make so much of his outward zeal. The zeal Jehu manifested seems to have been tinged with the desire to advance his own personal interests.

17. According to the saying. What Jehu did was as the Lord had foretold (1 Kings 21:21, 22). But he evidently went on beyond what God had required of him in his

endeavor to stamp out all possible opposition, for the Lord later declared that He was planning to “avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu” (Hosea 1:4).

18. All the people. This is an indication that, in spite of the reforms of Elijah and Elisha, the worship of Baal still had a strong hold upon the nation, for the people were gathered together ostensibly in the interests of some great festival in the honor of Baal.

19. All the prophets of Baal. Again this gives evidence that the worship of Baal was far from being exterminated out of the land of Israel. Baal still had many devoted followers, prophets and priests, as well as worshipers among the people.

I have a great sacrifice. If deception and trickery might achieve his purpose, he employed such devices without scruple. His antipathy to Baal may not have sprung, to any large degree, from devotion to God. Devotees of false religions are often bitterly arrayed against each other. During the lifetime of Ahab and Jezebel and during the time that Jehu served Joram, there is no record of any deep convictions that Jehu had in the matter of religion, either in favor of Jehovah or against Baal. Not until the house of Ahab had been crushed and there was no longer any danger in a defiance of Baal, did Jehu take his stand against the religion of Jezebel.

In subtlety. This was a crafty trick to attain his end. By means of this ruse, all cleverly planned out aforetime, Jehu thought by one bold, dramatic act to wipe out the religion of Baal from Israel. Unfortunately, it was more deeply rooted than he thought.

20. Proclaim a solemn assembly. Literally, “Sanctify a solemn assembly.” Compare the expression, “Sanctify ... a fast” (Joel 1:14). Jehu used language similar to that used for the calling of the most solemn festivals for Jehovah (see Lev. 23:36; Num. 29:35; Deut. 16:8).

21. One end to another. This would include not only the building proper but the surrounding court. The vast courts of ancient Oriental temples could hold large numbers of people.

22. Vestments. These were robes and caps of white linen. There were probably different types of vestments for the various classes of worshipers. The donning of these sacred robes would distinguish these individuals as adherents of Baal.

23. Jehonadab. See on v. 15. Jehonadab was probably known for his hatred of Baal and recognized for his zeal in behalf of the pure and simple worship of Jehovah.

Servants of the Lord. This would not lead to suspicion concerning Jehu’s intentions, since the presence of persons belonging to some other religious cult would be regarded by the worshipers of Baal as a profanation of their rites.

24. To offer sacrifices. Every preparation had been made for the carrying out of the sacred rites of Baal in a sumptuous manner.

For the life of him. Human life was cheap for such a man as Jehu. He wanted his orders obeyed. If there was any carelessness in the carrying out of his commands, his own soldiers would lose their lives.

25. Offering the burnt offering. It is not clear whether Jehu personally offered this sacrifice, or whether it was done in his behalf by one of the priests of Baal. The Bible frequently speaks of individuals offering their sacrifices in the sense that they provided the victims and had them offered in their behalf (Lev. 3:7, 12; 1 Kings 8:63). The actual sacrifices were probably the priests of Baal.

The guard. The royal bodyguard of the king. Up till this time it had been stationed outside, at the gate. Its presence would not create suspicion, since these soldiers always accompanied the king.

The city of the house of Baal. The exact meaning of this expression is not clear. One of the Greek versions reads “inner shrine” for “city.” The following verse indicates that the soldiers did enter the inner shrine of the house of Baal. As they entered into the court they would naturally first slay the worshipers nearest to them, and after having killed those in the court, they would enter the building and ultimately the central shrine, there to complete their bloody work.

26. Images. Heb. *maššebot*, “pillars.” In those days sacred pillars were common in Palestine. They are thought to have been masculine symbols of fertility. The Hebrews were commanded to destroy such pillars (Ex. 23:24; 34:13), and were forbidden to erect any “grove” (symbol of the goddess Asherah) or set any pillar near an altar to the Lord (see on Deut. 16:21, 22).

27. They brake down. It would seem that the chief pillar here, that of Baal, was of stone, because it was broken, whereas the other pillars must have been of wood, because they were burnt (v. 26).

A draught house. A “latrine” or “toilet” (see Ezra 6:11; Dan. 2:5; 3:29). This was to show utter contempt for the place formerly employed as a sacred shrine.

28. Destroyed Baal. While Jehu may have destroyed the manifestations of Baal worship from the nation of Israel, he certainly did not destroy the spirit of false religion. What Jehu did was simply to touch upon some of the externals of the religious life of the people. Basically the Israelites were as wicked, dishonest, corrupt, and immoral as before.

29. Jehu departed not. Jehu fought evil, but he employed evil to do it. Sin can never be overcome by sin. Wickedness in one form will never root out wickedness in other forms. Baal worship needed to be wiped out from Israel. But there was little of permanent good to be accomplished if Baal was not to be replaced by the worship of God. Jehu failed in that he did nothing to transform the hearts of his people. A man who himself did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam that had brought evil upon Israel, could hardly hope to deliver his nation from the sad effects of such iniquity.

The golden calves. These were the most important religious shrines in the nation, and were among the chief sources of the nation’s evil. By this time Bethel and Dan were no doubt regarded as national shrines, and held the same place in the regard of the people of Israel as did the Jerusalem Temple in Judah. If Jehu’s main aim had been righteousness and a return to Jehovah, he would have turned his zeal against the golden calves of Dan and Bethel as well as the house of Baal.

30. Because thou hast done well. The worship of Baal was a curse to the land of Israel, and the house of Ahab had been guilty of promoting this system of false religion. It was high time that something be done to put an end to the evil influences of the house of Ahab. It was also time that the idolatrous system of Baal worship be rooted out of the land. Jehu had done much toward checking the influence of evil and wiping out the sources of corruption. In that regard he had performed a great service to his nation and to the cause of righteousness, and this was recognized by the Lord.

Of the fourth generation. The work of Jehu was a mixture of good and evil. To a certain extent he had done the work of the Lord, but there were also serious evils in his

methods which did not have the approval of Heaven. His descendants who ruled upon the throne of Israel were Jehoahaz, Jehoash, Jeroboam II, and Zachariah. Shallum brought an end to Jehu's dynasty by slaying Zachariah (2 Kings 15:10, 12). The house of Jehu ruled Israel for about a century—longer than any other dynasty. The house of Jeroboam ruled 22 years and that of Omri 44 (24 and 48 inclusive; see p. 145; see also pp. 136, 138).

31. Took no heed. Jehu was a law to himself. He had little regard for the statutes of righteousness established by God.

32. To cut Israel short. The meaning is that the Lord began to cut off, or trim off, parts of the territory of Israel. Enemies were allowed to vex the borders, a harbinger of the doom that would come upon the entire nation if the inhabitants did not return to righteousness and God.

Hazael smote them. In fulfillment of the prophecy of Elisha (ch. 8:12). Shalmaneser III claims that in his 18th year he received tribute from Jehu. This, evidently, was the year in which Jehu came to the throne (see on ch. 9:2). Inasmuch as both Shalmaneser and Jehu were then enemies of Syria, Jehu probably thought it well, as soon as he became king of Israel, to make his peace with him by sending him a present. Upon the departure of Shalmaneser for his own land, Hazael could be expected to vent his wrath upon Jehu. The kings of Assyria appear not to have returned again to the Mediterranean coastlands till about 805 B.C., under Adad-nirari III. Syria would thus have a free hand against Israel.

33. Gilead and Bashan. These were districts on the eastern side of Jordan, immediately to the south of Syria, easily accessible to these militant enemies of Israel.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

11 PK 215, 254

16 TM 55; 2T 147; 4T 535; 5T 343

19, 28 PK 215

CHAPTER 11

1 *Jehoash, being saved by Jehosheba his aunt from Athaliah's massacre of the seed royal, is hid six years in the house of God.* 4 *Jehoiada, giving order to the captains, in the seventh year anointeth him king.* 13 *Athaliah is slain.* 17 *Jehoiada restoreth the worship of God.*

1. Athaliah. The death of Ahaziah at the hands of Jehu took place only a short time after the death of Joram in Israel (ch. 9:24, 27). However, the reign of Jehu began before the reign of Athaliah, although by only a very short time, possibly only a few days or weeks. Whether any particular significance is to be attached to the fact that the record of Jehu's accession to the throne (ch. 9:12, 13) precedes that of Athaliah (ch. 11:1–3) cannot be determined (see p. 145). In view of the fact that Jehu is presented as taking the initiative in events leading up to his accession (ch. 9:1–11), it would be only natural to expect the writer of 2 Kings to preserve the continuity of the narrative by recording the proclamation of Jehu as king first. (see on Gen. 25:19; 27:1; 35:29; Ex. 16:33, 35; 18:25). To introduce Athaliah first would interrupt the continuity of the record.

All the seed royal. Athaliah seems to have inherited the stormy and bloodthirsty spirit of her mother Jezebel. As the wife of Jehoram and the mother of Ahaziah, she might be expected to have dominated the policy of Judah during these two reigns. The influence of Israel left a strong impress upon Judah during this period (ch. 8:18, 27). Now Athaliah proceeded to carry on in her own right. The slaughter of all her relatives in Israel was a

severe blow to her. Before any plans could be formulated against her in Judah she struck first. She thought that she had utterly exterminated the posterity of David.

2. Jehosheba. Probably a half sister of Ahaziah—the daughter of Jehoram, not by Athaliah, but by another wife. She was the wife of Jehoiada the high priest (2 Chron. 22:11).

Which were slain. Joash was taken, not from among the bodies of those already slain, but from among the princes who were doomed to death.

In the bedchamber. Not in the palace, but in the Temple quarters of the priests. Jehosheba would hardly have been able to keep the child concealed in the palace, where everything would be under the watchful eye of the queen. But in the Temple quarters she could be expected to exercise a large measure of control.

3. Athaliah did reign. The record of Athaliah's reign is brief. To such a degree was she held in contempt that the Hebrew recorders left no details concerning the nature of her reign. However, from a comparison of 2 Kings 12:5–14 with 11:18 and 2 Chron. 24:7, it is clear that Athaliah made an effort to put an end to the worship of Jehovah and to establish the exclusive worship of Baal. The Temple services seem to have been discontinued and the Temple itself was allowed to fall into a state of disrepair. The sacred vessels of the Temple formerly used in the worship of Jehovah were doubtless turned over to the priests of Baal.

4. The seventh year. Evidently of Athaliah's reign. The mention of the revolution which brought an end to her rule as taking place in the "seventh year," and the statement that her successor, Jehoash, began to reign in the seventh year of Jehu (ch. 12:1), make this clear.

Jehoiada. The high priest at this time must have been a venerable old man, of about 100 years. At the time of his death he was 130 years old. He died before the end of the reign of Jehoash (2 Chron. 24:15, 17), who ruled 40 years (2 Kings 12:1). From the lengths of the reigns of the preceding kings it would seem that Jehoiada could not have been born later than the early part of Rehoboam's reign, possibly during the reign of Solomon. He had thus lived through many years of his country's checkered history.

Rulers over hundreds. The passage reads literally, "rulers of the Carians and of the guards." Five of these men are mentioned by name in 2 Chron. 23:1. The Carians were probably foreign mercenary troops employed for the royal guard, such as the Cherethites (see 1 Sam. 30:14; 2 Sam. 8:18; 15:18; 20:7, 23; 1 Kings 1:38, 44; 1 Chron. 18:17). The use of foreign mercenaries was common in the ancient Orient. The centurions invited by Jehoiada to a secret conference thus seem to have been the commanders of the royal guard. By such a bold stroke Jehoiada was making sure of the success of his mission, for he would have on his side the commanders whose duty it was to protect the king.

The king's son. The captains of the guard were now shown the son of Ahaziah, the lad who was the rightful king of Judah, and the one whose duty it was for these captains and their men to guard.

5. Commanded them. Jehoiada gave his commands to the palace guard in his capacity as guardian of the king.

On the sabbath. It has been suggested that the Sabbath was chosen for the inauguration of the new regime. On the other hand the reference to the Sabbath may merely mean that the system of the division of labor on the Sabbath formed a convenient pattern for the present distribution of duties.

Of the king's house. One company was to mount guard at the palace itself.

6. The gate of Sur. Also called "gate of the foundation" (2 Chron. 23:5). This gate has not been identified; it may have been the gate of the palace leading to the Temple.

The gate behind the guard. This gate likewise has not been identified; it may have been the gate at the rear of the palace. The object then would be to have the palace under complete control. The arrangement seems to have been that the men normally on duty at the palace were ordered to retain their positions there. Their presence would create no suspicions.

Broken down. Heb. *massach*. This word occurs only here, and its meaning is obscure. The LXX does not translate the word. Many Jewish commentators render it "without distraction of mind."

7. That go forth. The men who were probably normally off duty on the Sabbath.

About the king. The guards normally not on duty at the palace on the Sabbath were to be in the Temple to keep watch over the young king.

8. Let him be slain. Whoever might even attempt to approach the ranks of the guards about the king was immediately to be slain. In the maneuver that was about to take place the most vital factor was the safeguarding of the life of the young king, for certainly the partisans of Athaliah would make every effort to put him to death.

10. David's spears and shields. The old spears and shields of David were probably by this time regarded as sacred relics and were no longer in use by the guard. It is implied that the members of the guard who were to be in the Temple that day to keep watch over the new king, had come to the Temple unarmed. This was to allay suspicion. If the revolution was planned for the Sabbath (see on v. 5), it may be that the men had been told by their officers to be present at the Temple that Sabbath for some special purpose of worship; and if they were observers of the Sabbath, this would create no suspicion. If, however, they had been told to come to the Temple with their arms, on their day off, the secret would immediately have been out and the plot foiled.

11. His weapons in his hand. These men were ready for instant action. Those ancient weapons of David had seen much of valiant service, but seldom had they had the responsibility that was theirs this day. The safeguarding of the life of this young boy took on dramatic proportions in the light of God's promises to David (see 1 Kings 2:4; 8:25). He was all that remained of those eligible to the throne.

The right corner. From the standpoint of facing east. The right corner of the Temple was the south and the left was the north.

By the altar. The altar of burnt offering stood directly in front of the Temple porch. It was on the porch of the Temple that the king was to be stationed, in full view of the worshipers in the court. The soldiers were drawn up, several ranks deep, across the entire front of the Temple, to prevent anyone from entering there. Orders had been expressly given that none were to "come into the house of the Lord, save the priests, and they that minister of the Levites" (2 Chron. 23:6).

12. The king's son. The young prince had been hidden in the Temple, and after the guards were in their positions he was brought forth for the coronation ceremonies, to take his place by one of the pillars (2 Chron. 23:13) of the Temple porch. This was no ordinary occasion, and every possible preparation had been made in harmony with its importance. The Levites had been gathered from all the land, and also "the chief of the fathers of Israel" (2 Chron. 23:2).

The testimony. Heb. *ha'eduth*, the term commonly used of the Ten Commandments. The "testimony" may have been the book of the law. If so, the use of this law in the coronation ceremony was to denote the king's devotion to the law of the Lord, according to which he would regulate his life and rule his people. This passage of Scripture is the basis of the custom of placing a copy of the Bible in the hands of British monarchs during the coronation service.

God save the king. Literally, "let the king live." These were the words employed at the coronation of Saul (1 Sam. 10:24), of Absalom (2 Sam. 16:16), Adonijah (1 Kings 1:25), and Solomon (1 Kings 1:39). On this occasion the words were more than a perfunctory phrase. Upon the saving of the life of this child would hang the destiny of the dynasty of David. The young king would have many enemies. If he were slain, that would be the end of the direct line of the house of David. The cry, "Let the king live," ascended to heaven with many anxious and earnest prayers as well as with a note of great rejoicing. It was commonly thought that Athaliah had succeeded in destroying all the seed royal (2 Kings 11:1). When it was discovered that one of the princes had been spared and was now king, a shout of triumph must have sounded throughout the city.

13. Of the guard. The nation now had its rightful king and the guard its true master. After years of misrule by a scion of the house of Ahab, the guard must have accepted their new king and their new responsibility with loud shouts of joy. These shouts, mingled with the jubilation of the people, reached the ears of the hated queen and filled her with alarm and consternation.

She came to the people. The center of the shouting and of the festivities was clearly in the Temple, and thither the queen made her way. The indication is that she went alone. If she summoned her personal guard stationed about the palace, it no longer obeyed her orders, but stayed where it was, obedient to the orders of Jehoiada (vs. 5, 6).

14. By a pillar. On the Temple porch, by one of its great bronze pillars (see 1 Kings 7:15, 21).

The princes. That is, the captains. These were the commanders of the royal guard who had taken up their position next to the king.

All the people. A large multitude at this time filled the Temple court. Representatives were present from all the land (2 Chron. 23:2). If it was the Sabbath, large numbers would be there from Jerusalem and the surrounding countryside. Probably Jehoiada had announced preparations for some sort of festival that brought to the Temple an unusually large number of people.

Rent her clothes. One glance revealed that all was lost. Her own guards were there protecting the new king and taking part in the joyous festivities. Athaliah stood alone, forsaken by all. She could hope for nothing, and expected nothing. This was the end of everything for her. How different from the scene of Paul's dark days in a Roman prison when, forsaken by men, he yet had the assurance that the Lord stood with him and strengthened him (2 Tim. 4:17).

15. Without the ranges. Or, "between the ranks," that is, "under armed escort." The queen was probably to be conducted outside of the Temple precincts to meet her death, with a row of soldiers on each side of her.

16. By the way. What a sad end for the once proud and haughty daughter of Jezebel! But it was a death that befitted her. She died as did her mother, abandoned, despised, and hated by all. Jezebel was trodden underfoot by horses in her own palace court, her

daughter walked her last steps in the way of the horses leading to the palace, and there was ignominiously slain.

17. A covenant. Between the Lord on one side and the king and the people on the other. It was a renewal of the covenants of old, whereby the people accepted Jehovah as their Lord and promised that they would be obedient to His laws. No longer would they give recognition to Baal, whom Athaliah had endeavored to substitute as lord of the land instead of Jehovah.

Between the king. Such a covenant was desperately needed. Under the last three reigns the rights of the people had been sadly abused. The rulers had no scruples and did what they wished, regardless the rights of the people. Now that a new king was beginning to reign, a solemn agreement was made under the terms of which the king was bound to govern according to the laws of justice and the ways of the Lord and the people were to give their allegiance to the house of David and Jehovah their King.

18. The house of Baal. To such lengths had the daughter of Jezebel gone that under her dominance an actual temple for Baal had been established in or near Jerusalem. The purpose, of course, was to have it take the place of the Temple of God. This pagan temple was now completely demolished.

Images. Heb. *šalmim*. Not the same word translated “images” in ch. 10:26. The *šalmim* were images made in the likeness of the gods themselves.

Appointed officers. Evidently the house of God had been sadly neglected and even abused during the reign of Athaliah and perhaps that of her predecessor. Some have suggested that Athaliah may have established the house of Baal within the very precincts of the house of God, possibly in the outer court. Certain parts of the Temple and the accompanying buildings may even have been demolished to provide materials for the building of the temple of Baal. At least there were “breaches” that needed extensive repairs (ch. 12:5–12). A building so well constructed as the Temple would not have gone to pieces so quickly simply as a result of the natural processes of deterioration. According to 2 Chron. 24:7 the “sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken up the house of God; and also all the dedicated things of the house of the Lord did they bestow upon Baalim.” After the destruction of the house of Baal, officers were appointed whose duties were probably to supervise the reestablishment of the services of the Lord in the Temple, and to see to it that there would be no future desecration of the Temple precincts by sympathizers with the old regime (see 2 Chron. 23:19).

19. Gate of the guard. This was probably the main gate of the palace. Its exact location is not known.

20. They slew Athaliah. The death of Athaliah has already been mentioned (v. 16). But this is the conclusion of the account of her reign, and thus the mention of her death is in order. The account of Athaliah’s reign neither begins nor ends according to the usual formula.

21. Seven years old. Since this item is connected with the account of the reign of Jehoash, it would be more appropriate to have the entire verse as the first verse of ch. 12.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

12 PK 215
14–16, 18PK 216

CHAPTER 12

1 *Jehoash reigneth well all the days of Jehoiada.* 4 *He giveth order for the repair of the temple.* 17 *Hazael is diverted from Jerusalem by a present of the hallowed treasures.* 19 *Jehoash being slain by his servants, Amaziah succeedeth him.*

1. Seventh year of Jehu. The account of the reign of Jehoash (or Joash; the two forms appear interchangeably [vs. 1, 2, 4, etc.; cf. vs. 19, 20; ch. 13:1, 10]) begins again with the usual formula.

2. Instructed him. See 2 Chron. 24:2.

3. Were not taken away. This situation had continued during the reigns of Asa (1 Kings 15:14) and Jehoshaphat (1 Kings 22:43), and certainly during the reigns of their successors Jehoram, Ahaziah, and Athaliah. The same situation continued during the reigns of Amaziah (2 Kings 14:4), Azariah (ch. 15:4), Jotham (ch. 15:35), and Ahaz (ch. 16:4). It was not till the time of Hezekiah that the high places were finally abolished (ch. 18:4). But after his death they were again restored by Manasseh (ch. 21:3). Thus in spite of the reigns of so many good kings in Judah, worship at the high places seems to have continued practically throughout the history of the southern kingdom. These high places were not necessarily idolatrous shrines. Before the building of the Temple by Solomon it was customary for the people to sacrifice in such high places (1 Kings 3:2). When Josiah destroyed the high places the priests who had formerly ministered there were not permitted to come up “to the altar of the Lord in Jerusalem, but they did eat of the unleavened bread among their brethren” (2 Kings 23:9). At the time of Manasseh “the people did sacrifice still in the high places, yet unto the Lord their God only” (2 Chron. 33:17). Many of these high places, however, must have been centers of corrupt and idolatrous worship (see Lev. 26:30; Num. 22:41; 33:52; 1 Kings 13:33; 2 Kings 17:29; 2 Chron. 14:3; 34:3, 4).

4. Jehoash said. The move to restore the Temple appears to have been inaugurated not by Jehoiada the priest but by Jehoash the king. Jehoiada was very old at this time (see on ch. 11:4). Evidently the aged priest no longer possessed the vigor to bestir himself with many matters that were really of great importance, and it was thus left to the king to take the initiative in the restoration of the Temple.

All the money. Three different kinds of offerings are here referred to : (1) “The dedicated things.” Money from persons who had made vows to the Lord or who had dedicated certain animals or objects to Him (see Lev. 27:2–28). (2) “The money of every one that passeth the account.” That is, the money each individual was assessed. This was half a shekel, whether rich or poor (Ex. 30:13–15). (3) “The money that cometh into any man’s heart.” This consisted of freewill offerings.

5. To them. That is, to themselves. What is meant is that each priest was to take the money from those he was acquainted with. This was evidently to be done not only in Jerusalem but throughout the land.

Let them repair. That is, the priests were to have the supervision of the work.

6. Had not repaired. Probably some efforts at repair had been made before Jehoash had been on the throne 23 years, but if so, the work had gone on only halfheartedly and little had been accomplished.

7. Why repair ye not? An upbraiding of the priests for dereliction of duty in failing to complete the Temple repairs.

Receive no more money. What had evidently happened was that the priests were receiving the money and using it for themselves. The king now ordered that this be

stopped, and that the money be handed over for the purpose for which it was intended—the repair of the Temple.

8. *The priests consented.* The matter was taken entirely out of the hands of the recreant priests. They gave their consent not to endeavor to collect further funds for this purpose, and to allow the work of repair to be directed by others.

9. *Took a chest.* This was at the direction of the king (2 Chron. 24:8).

Beside the altar. The altar of burnt offering, in the court. According to 2 Chron. 24:8, it was set “without at the gate of the house of the Lord.” Either these are two different descriptions of the same spot, or the chest was moved during the course of the collections.

10. *The king’s scribe.* This was an important officer of the court, who not only took care of the king’s correspondence but probably also managed the royal purse. The Assyrian sculptures portray scribes taking a record of the spoil brought in from foreign conquests. Since the scribe was responsible directly to the king, Jehoash was assured that the offerings for the Temple repair would henceforth be handled according to his directions.

High priest. This is the first time this title is used since the time of the Exodus and the conquest (Lev. 21:10; Num. 35:25; Joshua 20:6). The collaboration of the high priest with the king’s scribe in supervising these funds, provided a double check against any misuse.

Told. Heb. *manah*, literally, “to count,” “to number,” or “to assign.”

11. *Being told.* Heb. *takan*, “to estimate,” “to measure,” probably here in the sense of “to certify.” At this time coinage had not yet been introduced and precious metals went by weight.

13. *Any vessels.* During the work of repairing the Temple building no money was diverted for any other purpose, not even for the replacing of vessels for the Temple services. When the work was completed, the surplus was brought before the king and the chief priest, who directed that it be used for vessels for the house of the Lord (2 Chron. 24:14). The need for supplying new bowls, etc., arose because Athaliah had bestowed the dedicated articles of God’s house to Baalim (2 Chron. 24:7).

15. *Dealt faithfully.* This is a splendid testimony to the character of those chosen for this important responsibility. The same commendation is given to those who in the time of Josiah carried on a similar work of renovation (ch. 22:7). It is a sad commentary on the character of the priests who by their faithlessness had made this step necessary (see ch. 12:4–8).

16. *The trespass money.* See Lev. 5:15–18; Num. 5:6–8. According to the law of Moses these funds rightfully belonged to the priests and were given to them. When special funds were coming in for the Temple repairs, the priests were not deprived of their regular gifts. But when other funds were being brought in for another purpose, it was altogether unlawful for the priests to misapply those funds to their own selfish ends, and thus thwart the carrying out of vital projects. That cause prospers most which maintains the greatest degree of integrity, making possible confidence and liberality. Such a course provides means sufficient to carry out every necessary task.

17. *Then Hazael.* The events here mentioned took place not long after the repair of the Temple, which began in the 23d year of Jehoash’s reign (v. 6), the same year that

Jehoahaz came to the throne in Israel (ch. 13:1). After the death of Jehoiada, Joash fell into sin, and brought upon himself the onslaughts of Hazael (2 Chron. 24:15–25).

Gath. Hazael reached this Philistine city probably via Beth-shan, the Jezreel Valley, and the coastal plain; hence he must have mastered the northern kingdom of Israel (see ch. 13:3). Gath, so far from Syria, must have reverted soon to Philistine control. Later Azariah of Judah broke down the wall of Gath (2 Chron. 26:6). The site of the city is uncertain. Most scholars have favored *'Araq el-Menshiyeh*, at the modern *Kiryat Gat*, 6 1/2 mi. (10.4 km.) west of *Beit Jibrin* (Eleutheropolis in NT times). But *Beit Jibrin* and *Tell eṣ-Ṣâfi* (usually identified with Libnah) have been suggested also. A site immediately north of *Kiryat Gat*, supported by many Israeli scholars, is *Tell Sheikh el-Areini*, 6 1/2 mi. (10.4 km.) west of *Beit Jibrin* and 20 mi. (32 km.) west-northwest of Hebron.

To Jerusalem. When Hazael had taken Gath, he was southwest of Jerusalem, and the city lay on the road of a convenient way back to Damascus. It was probably on this occasion that the host of Syria came up “to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the princes of the people” (2 Chron. 24:23). After the death of Jehoiada, the king of Judah and his princes “left the house of the Lord God of their fathers, and served groves and idols” (2 Chron. 24:18). When Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, protested against this iniquity, they “stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the Lord” (2 Chron. 24:21). At this time Hazael came against Jerusalem, where he was met by “a very great host,” but gained the victory “with a small company,” because the people “had forsaken the Lord” (2 Chron. 24:24).

20. Slew Joash. When the Syrians departed “they left him [Joash] in great diseases” (2 Chron. 24:25), evidently sorely wounded. While Joash was confined to his bed the conspirators slew him. The conspiracy was obviously connected with the king’s apostasy and the base murder of Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada. Joash owed his life and his throne to the faithful high priest. It was an act of base ingratitude to slay the son of his benefactor. So great was the sentiment against Joash that at his death “they buried him not in the sepulchres of the kings” (2 Chron. 24:25).

Millo. Probably a fortified area in the northern part of the ancient Jebusite city captured by David. David had done much work to strengthen this area (2 Sam. 5:9; 1 Chron. 11:8), and the main fortification was completed by Solomon (1 Kings 11:27). Joash had probably been confined in this house of Millo chiefly for security reasons.

Silla. This place has not been identified.

21. Jozachar. Called Zabad the son of an Ammonitess (2 Chron. 24:26). Jozachar means, “Jehovah has remembered.”

Jehozabad. Called “the son of Shimrith a Moabitess” (2 Chron. 24:26). Jehozabad means “Jehovah has given.” There is an interesting coincidence between the names of these two conspirators and the last words that Jehoiada’s son, Zechariah, uttered when he was stoned at the command of Joash, “The Lord look upon it, and require it” (2 Chron. 24:22), meaning, “Let the Lord see and give vengeance.” King Joash failed to remember the kindness of the priest Jehoiada toward him, but the Lord remembered and gave vengeance.

CHAPTER 13

1 *Jehoahaz's wicked reign.* 3 *Jehoahaz, oppressed by Hazael, is relieved by prayer.* 8 *Joash succeedeth him.* 10 *His wicked reign.* 12 *Jeroboam succeedeth him.* 14 *Elisha dying prophesieth to Joash three victories over the Syrians.* 20 *The Moabites invading the land, Elisha's bones raise up a dead man.* 22 *Hazael dying, Joash getteth three victories over Ben-hadad.*

1. Jehoahaz. The record of Jehu's death and of Jehoahaz' accession to the throne is found in ch. 10:35. But the record of Jehoahaz' reign does not appear till this place, because of the fact that reigns are generally arranged in the books of Kings to accord with the order of accession of the rulers to the throne.

Only a few days, presumably, after Jehu began to reign in Israel, Athaliah took the throne of Judah. Then in the 7th year of Jehu, the child Joash began his long rule of 40 years in Judah. That is evidently why these three reigns appear in Kings in the above order: Jehu, Athaliah, Joash. Then Jehoahaz of Israel and his successor Jehoash, both of whom came to the throne during the lifetime of Joash of Judah, come next in the record. After this the narrative goes back again to Judah to record the reign of Amaziah, who succeeded Joash.

3. The anger of the Lord. Human anger is unreasoning, cruel, and vindictive. God's anger is a vastly different emotion. In describing His character to men, God is limited to human language. He must, of necessity, permit Bible writers to use expressions that most nearly approximate the divine thought even though these expressions may poorly convey that thought. "Anger" is here used to describe the response of God to sin. To understand the word "anger," when applied to God, to embody all the elements of human response to provocation, is to do violence to Biblical language. We cannot by searching find out God (Job 11:7). Partly because of the inadequacy of human language, God, at the opportune moment (Gal. 4:4), made His thought audible and visible in the life of Jesus. Man had only a twilight conception of what God was like. In Christ, God gave a demonstration to the world of His character. Jesus declared, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9) To get a more perfect understanding of the nature of the "anger" of God, it is necessary to study the reactions of Jesus to situations that might rightfully call forth such an emotion. Observe His demeanor when cleansing the Temple (John. 2:13–17), a display of indignation, authority, and power. See Him rebuke the Pharisees (Matt. 23) with tears in His voice (ST 13). Notice His anguished weeping over the recalcitrant Jews (Luke 19:41; DA 575, 587). Then recall that it was He who directed the destinies of Israel in the days of Jehoahaz. The afflictions of Syria were permitted in love and in the hope that their discipline might restore the wayward Israelites to reason and to God.

The hand of Hazael. The protecting hand of the Lord was withdrawn from Israel, and Hazael was permitted to succeed in his wars against Jehoahaz. This situation continued not only during the days of Hazael but also during part of the reign of his son Benhadad III.

4. Hearkened unto him. The Lord is a God of mercy and goodness. He is always willing to forgive when sinners repent and turn to Him. When Jehoahaz turned to God, the Lord in His kindness directed events so as to grant Israel deliverance.

5. A saviour. The reference is probably to Adad-nirari III, who ruled Assyria, according to the Assyrian Eponym Canon, or limmu list (see pp. 55, 155), from approximately 810–782 B.C. In the fifth year of his reign, Adad-nirari III tells about a great campaign to the Mediterranean, in the course of which the king of Syria became his

vassal and was forced to pay a heavy tribute. This crushing of Syrian under the Assyrian heel would effectively put an end to Syrian encroachments against Israel.

Their tents. Their houses or homes (see 1 Kings 8:66).

6. Grove. Heb. *'asherah*. Jehu evidently had allowed this heathenish symbol in Samaria to remain. The *'asherah* was a sacred tree, symbolic of the productive principle in nature, so prominent a feature in Eastern fertility cults (see on Ex. 34:13).

7. Fifty horsemen. According to the Assyrian account Ahab had 2,000 chariots and 10,000 infantry at the time of the battle of Qarqar. As a result of a series of disastrous engagements with Syria, Israel lost practically all its chariots and cavalry. This was equivalent to practically complete disarmament, and rendered Israel almost entirely defenseless.

Like the dust. A figure of speech, denoting the extreme cruelty of Syria. For this cruelty, of threshing "Gilead with threshing instruments of iron" (Amos 1:3), the prophet Amos a short time later pronounced the Lord's judgment upon Damascus (Amos 1:4, 5).

9. Joash. This Joash of Israel is sometimes called Jehoash (vs. 10, 25; ch. 14:8–17). The fact that he was born during the reign of Joash of Judah, suggests that he may have been named after that ruler, and if so, this would indicate a period of close friendship between the two nations.

10. Thirty and seventh year. For the reckoning of Jehoash's reign, see p. 148.

Joash ... Jehoash. This distinction in spelling is not always observed, hence care must be taken to avoid confusing the two kings of the same name.

12. The rest of the acts. The regular formula closing the account of the reign of a king occurs in vs. 12 and 13. A formal record of Joash of Israel is found in vs. 10 to 13. This Joash is mentioned again in v. 25 (as Jehoash), but in a section dealing primarily with the oppressions of Syria during the reigns of both Jehoahaz and Jehoash of Israel (vs. 22–25) and also in ch. 14:8–14 in a section dealing with the reign of Amaziah of Judah. However, this latter section is followed by another formal closing formula of the reign of this same Jehoash (ch. 14:15, 16) in practically the same words as in (ch. 13:12, 13).

13. Sat upon his throne. This statement differs from the stereotyped formula, "Jeroboam his son reigned in his stead" (ch. 14:16). The Talmud (*Seder Olam*) and the Jewish scholar Kimchi suggest the implication that Joash associated his son Jeroboam with himself on the throne.

14. Wept. It appears that the death of Elisha occurred while Joash of Israel was still alive. Joash evidently recognized in the aged prophet a valuable counselor and helper, and realized that the death of the man of God was a tragic loss to Israel.

My father. A title of respect. At the same time the aged prophet was indeed a kind, wise, sympathetic father. Whenever the king found himself in difficulty, he could go to the prophet for guidance and strength. Joash was far from righteous, but he was nevertheless drawn to Elisha, and recognized in him a true servant of God.

The chariot of Israel. This statement suggests that Joash, by his reverses, was led to acknowledge that the prophet and his God meant more to Israel than any number of horses and chariots. Israel had at this time been deprived of most of its horses and chariots (v. 7). The presence of Elisha symbolized to Israel the presence of the Lord. By

his ministry the prophet had endeavored to bring the king and the people to a realization that it was in Jehovah alone that the nation would find its true defense and strength.

15. Take bow and arrows. Symbolic actions impress the truth more vividly than abstract statements. The value of visual aids in teaching has long been recognized. Such devices were employed by God from earliest times. The present action carried with it an additional element of instructive value. The king himself took part. His participation at once impressed the prediction upon his mind and brought home to his heart the lesson that his future success depended upon the degree to which he would work in harmony with the divine directions.

16. Upon the king's hands. Probably to impress the king that if he would do as the Lord directed, God would be with him to guide and strengthen and to give him success.

17. Eastward. Toward the east was Gilead, then held by Syria. The king was to direct his efforts toward the east, to bring deliverance to the cities beyond the Jordan that were then under Syrian control.

The Lord's deliverance. As the king shot his arrow toward the east in response to the command from the messenger of God, Elisha, under divine inspiration, foretold the coming victory of Israel over the forces of Damascus.

Aphek. Several towns widely separated bore this name (see on 1 Sam. 4:1). The one probably referred to here is the town 3 3/4 mi. (6 km.) east of the Sea of Galilee on a road connecting the Jordan valley with Damascus. This may also have been the Aphek where the Syrians suffered a disastrous defeat at the hands of Ahab (1 Kings 20:26–34), and where Ahab had shown them an unreasonable lenity. The site is now called *Fiq*.

18. Smite upon the ground. A further symbolical act to indicate that victory over Syria would not be easy. Complete deliverance would not come except as the result of long and sustained effort. The king was being tested.

Stayed. Joash stopped too soon. He had been told to strike the ground, but it was for him to decide how often he would strike. This would determine the results achieved. If he were aggressive and determined, persevering in his task till every objective had been achieved, he could gain a victory over his enemy so complete that Syria would never again be a threat to Israel.

19. Five or six times. Total victory would require much more effort than would the recovery of a district across the Jordan. It would mean an attack on Syria itself, till the nation had been consumed and would no longer be in a position to rise again as a menace to Israel and its neighbors. The lesson for Joash is a lesson for all. Results in the work of the Lord are in direct proportion to the effort put forth. The Lord calls for earnest, persevering, continuous effort. The work lags because laborers in the vineyard of the Lord grow tired too soon. If every worker put all he had into the task of saving souls, results would be tenfold greater than they are today. God can achieve victories of grace through His servants only as they give themselves in complete consecration to Him and work with unflagging energy and zeal.

20. Elisha died. Elisha was not privileged to ride the fiery chariot to heaven. It was his lot to suffer a lingering sickness and finally death. Many a devoted child of God has been called upon to pass through long hours of sickness and suffering. The reason may not always be plain, but in these trying moments comfort may be found in the knowledge that God is working all things for good, even the afflictions of the enemy (Rom. 8:28). Satan must be permitted to annoy lest he be able to advance the charge that he was not

given a fair opportunity with every soul. This principle is clearly illustrated in the experience of Job (chs. 1, 2). It is further verified in the lives of godly men, who, despite their piety, suffered much pain and distress. The sufferer does well in trying moments to ponder the experiences of these worthies: (1) To reflect on godly Elisha, who had been instrumental in healing others of their diseases, even bringing back the dead to life, pining away of a mortal disease; (2) to behold John the Baptist, languishing in prison and shamelessly beheaded because of the rashness of a dissolute king; (3) to listen to the prayer of Paul for the removal of the “thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan,” and the response in the negative (2 Cor. 12:7–10); (4) to consider the fate of the disciples, all of whom met death by violence except John, and even he endured torture and banishment; (5) to contemplate Jesus, the supreme Exemplar, who, though He was the Son of God, suffered as no child of humanity will ever be called upon to suffer, and who declared, “The servant is not greater than his lord” (John 15:20).

In his final illness, Elisha did not complain or lose his faith in God. He knew that the presence of the Lord was always near and that angels were ever by his side. As he lived, so he died, trusting, hoping, faithful to the end.

Moabites. Moab lay to the east of the lower Jordan and the Dead Sea (see on ch. 3:4). Joram and Jehoshaphat had gained a measure of victory over the Moabites (ch. 3:24), but the enemy had now recovered and was making marauding expeditions into the territories of Israel.

The coming in of the year. Evidently the year beginning in the spring (see p. 109), with the month of Nisan, approximately our April. That was the natural season for military campaigns, for the rainy season was over, and the crops in Palestine were ripening. Thus the invading armies were able to live off the land and to carry away the new stocks of grain.

21. He revived. This incident probably had a profound effect upon those who witnessed the miracle and upon those to whom it was later related. It was a time of distress and annoyance. The Moabites were making forays into the land and snatching away the new harvests. It was a time when men might well inquire, Where is the God of Elisha? Where are the miracles of the past? The resuscitation of the corpse gave evidence that the God of Israel was not dead. He was ready to work miracles even now. If men would heed the messages of the departed prophet, God would once more grant victory over the intruder and restore security to the land.

23. Was gracious. God keeps an accurate account with all nations, to see whether they will fulfill the divine destiny marked out for them. They are granted a period of probation at the end of which, if they have failed to measure up to the privileges granted them, they are removed. Israel had not yet come to the end of her probation. It was not yet too late to make amends for the failures of the past and to fulfill the original purposes God had in mind when He called Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Individuals, too, are tried to see whether they will fulfill the divine purpose in their creation. To every man God has assigned a specific place in His plan. Man is truly successful only as he faithfully fulfills this Heaven-appointed purpose. Many have departed far from the original pattern, and, like Israel of old, are headed for disaster. God’s mercy is still extended, but the days are crucial. One day, and soon, the fire will try every man’s work, to see of what sort it is (1 Cor. 3:13). Then every man will be rewarded according to his work (2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 22:12).

As yet. Israel, thus far, had resisted every effort of the Lord to bring them to repentance. But God continued to be merciful, and gave them every opportunity to turn from their iniquity in order that the nation might not perish.

24. Ben-hadad. Benhadad III. The first king by that name was a contemporary of Asa (1 Kings 15:18), and the second a contemporary of Ahab and Jehoshaphat (1 Kings 20:1, 34). On the inscriptions of the Assyrian king Adad-nirari III, Ben-hadad appears under the name *Mari'*, an Aramaic title meaning "my lord."

25. Took again. Elisha had predicted this victory of Joash (v. 17). If the king of Israel had trusted in God and extended his victories, he would have inflicted a crushing and perhaps mortal blow upon Syria (v. 19).

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CHAPTER 14

1 *Amaziah's good reign.* 5 *His justice on the murderers of his father.* 7 *His victory over Edom.* 8 *Amaziah, provoking Jehoash, is overcome and spoiled.* 15 *Jeroboam succeedeth Jehoash.* 17 *Amaziah slain by a conspiracy.* 21 *Azariah succeedeth him.* 23 *Jeroboam's wicked reign.* 28 *Zachariah succeedeth him.*

1. Second year of Joash. The history of Judah is now resumed, because Amaziah of Judah was the next king to begin his reign after Joash (Jehoash) of Israel took the throne (see on ch. 13:10). On the method of reckoning Amaziah's reign, see p. 148.

3. Not like David. "Not with a perfect heart" (2 Chron. 25:2). The outstanding sin of Amaziah was his worship of the gods of Edom after he had defeated the Edomites in battle, and his threatening the life of the prophet who rebuked him because of his defection from God (2 Chron. 25:14–16).

4. Not taken away. Judah continued to worship at the high places till these shrines were taken away by Hezekiah (ch. 18:4).

5. Was confirmed. There was obviously a period of unrest and confusion after the murder of Joash of Judah (ch. 12:20, 21), during which time the new king doubtless experienced difficulty in asserting and maintaining his rights. When these troubles had passed and the authority of the king had been established throughout the nation, he was in a position to take effective measures against the murderers of his father.

6. Children of the murderers. The mention of this point denotes that it was common in those days to put the children to death with their parents for such offenses.

Law of Moses. See Deut. 24:16.

7. He slew of Edom. This is a brief mention of Amaziah's war with Edom, which is treated at greater length in 2 Chron. 25:5–13. According to that account Amaziah not only slew 10,000 of the Edomites in battle but took another 10,000 captive, who were later slain by being cast from the top of a rock.

Valley of salt. The location of this valley is not certain. Two sites have been suggested: (1) an area on the south end of the Dead Sea; (2) the *Wadi el-Milh* (salt) to the east of Beersheba.

Selah. Literally, “rock.” This is probably the famous region of Petra, 51 mi. (81.6 km.) south of the Dead Sea. “Petra” is the Greek name for “rock.” The capital of Edom may have been in this area at that time.

8. Sent messengers. The record in Chronicles gives a fuller account of the underlying causes of the impending war. In addition to his own large army, Amaziah had hired “an hundred thousand mighty men of valour out of Israel for an hundred talents of silver” (2 Chron. 25:6). The king, being warned, however, by a prophet that the Lord would not be with him if these forces from Israel accompanied him, dismissed the men. Disgusted at this treatment, the returning soldiers attacked and plundered a number of the cities of Judah (2 Chron. 25:7–10, 13). Amaziah, intoxicated by his success against Edom, and angered by the ravaging of the cities of Judah by the returning Israelites, decided on war against Israel.

Look one another in the face. A challenge to war. The language suggests an invitation to personal combat.

9. Thistle. The king of Israel replied by sending a message expressing his disdain for the king of Judah. Had Amaziah been successful against Edom? Jehoash had also been successful against the much stronger kingdom of Syria. His retort was that of a superior gentleman who considers it an insult to receive a challenge from so unworthy a foe. The cedar was the largest, strongest, most majestic tree of Palestine. The thistle was a lowly, useless, contemptible shrub that one would crush underfoot.

Give thy daughter. Jehoshaphat had entered into an alliance with Ahab. The arrangement was sealed by the marriage of Ahab’s daughter Athaliah to Jehoshaphat’s son Jehoram (1 Kings 22:44; 2 Kings 8:18, 26; 2 Chron. 18:1). The royal families further indicated their friendship for each other by giving their children the same names, Jehoram and Ahaziah in Judah, and Ahaziah and Jehoram in Israel. The king of Israel, whom Amaziah was now challenging to battle, bore the same name as Amaziah’s father, Jehoash, suggesting a continued period of friendship between the two nations. It is entirely possible that Amaziah had made overtures to Jehoash about a formal alliance to be sealed by the marriage of the daughter of Jehoash to the son of Amaziah. If so, Jehoash was now taunting Amaziah about the overture.

10. Lifted thee up. Jehoash was here calling attention to the real facts in the matter. Amaziah’s victory over Edom had gone to his head. Having been successful in his war against Edom without the assistance of the forces of Israel, Amaziah felt he could easily humble Jehoash.

Why shouldest thou meddle? Men’s troubles are often of their own making. There was no reason for Judah now to engage in war with Israel. Jehoash did well not to take up the challenge and to warn Amaziah that he was courting trouble for himself and his nation.

11. Would not hear. Amaziah’s feelings had been ruffled and as a result, reason had fled. He was acting like a spoiled child, and refused to give ear to the sound counsel being offered him by the man he was seeking to engage in battle.

Beth-shemesh. A town 15 mi. (24 km.) west-southwest of Jerusalem. Jehoash did not wait for the attack, but sent his forces south, evidently intending to approach Jerusalem from the west by the ancient highway passing through the Valley of Sorek. This is the route now followed by the railroad from Jaffa to Jerusalem. The site of Beth-shemesh, now *Tell er-Rumeileh*, was excavated in 1928–1933.

12. Put to the worse. The results were as Jehoash had predicted. Amaziah had meddled to his own hurt, and Judah had now to pay the price for the folly of its king.

13. Took Amaziah. In ancient times wars were fought with great vigor, and kings and commanders were often found in the forefront of the lines of battle with their troops. Ahab of Israel and Josiah of Judah lost their lives in battle (1 Kings 22:34–37; 2 Kings 23:29), and the life of Jehoshaphat was seriously threatened (1 Kings 22:32, 33).

Gate of Ephraim. This was a large section of either the northern wall at the western end or the western wall at the northern end. The object of this destruction was evidently to leave the capital of Judah at the mercy of Israel. The loss of this portion of the wall was a great humiliation to the people of Judah.

Four hundred cubits. Over 600 ft.

14. The gold and silver. This incident occurred only a few years after Joash had sent the Temple treasures to Hazael to secure the Syrian king's departure from Jerusalem (ch. 12:18). Now the treasures that had been accumulated since that time fell also into enemy hands.

Hostages. The taking of hostages was a common practice in ancient times. These prisoners were selected from among the prominent citizens of a country. The victors hoped, by this device, to ensure the future good behavior of the vanquished. Not only had the pride of Amaziah been humbled, but the entire nation of Judah had to suffer severely because of the king's rash challenge to Jehoash.

15. The rest of the acts. Verses 15, 16 interrupt the account of the reign of Amaziah, which is continued in v. 18. They contain the closing formula of Jehoash's reign which had, however, already been given in ch. 13:12, 13. The repetition of this formula is thought by some to be an indication of a coregency of Jeroboam II with his father Jehoash (see p. 82).

17. Fifteen years. This is the only place in the records of the kings where such an item as this occurs.

19. Conspiracy. Amaziah was evidently far from popular in Judah. His rash challenge to Jehoash, his disastrous defeat, the humiliation connected with the tearing down of a large part of the wall of Jerusalem, the seizure of hostages, and the loss of the Temple and palace treasures probably all contributed to make the people bitter against their ruler.

Lachish. A city now generally identified with *Tell ed-Duweir*, about 27 mi. (43.2 km.) southwest of Jerusalem.

20. On horses. Lachish was connected with Jerusalem by a chariot road leading east to the central highlands and then north to the capital. Micah mentions chariots in connection with Lachish in his prophetic allusion to the city (Micah 1:13).

21. All the people. This statement suggests a popular movement in which the whole nation was involved. When one king dies and his son comes to the throne, there is normally no need of mentioning the fact that all the people were involved. On a probable coregency of Azariah with his father, from the time of Amaziah's capture (v. 13), see on 2 Chron. 25:27; 26:1.

22. Elath. A city on the Gulf of Aqabah, near Ezion-geber (Deut. 2:8), in the land of Edom (1 Kings 9:26). It probably fell to Israel when David conquered Edom (2 Sam. 8:14). Solomon utilized its port facilities (1 Kings 9:26; 2 Chron. 8:17, 18). It was probably lost to Judah when Edom revolted from Jehoram (2 Kings 8:20–22).

23. Jeroboam. The same name as that of the first king of Israel (1 Kings 12:20). He is sometimes called Jeroboam II by present-day scholars to distinguish him from the first Jeroboam. Jeroboam II may have been named after the founder of the kingdom of Israel, and, in giving this name to his son, the father may have hoped that his successor would be a second founder, and bring the nation into a new era of strength and prosperity.

24. Evil. This is the regular condemnation of the rulers of the northern kingdom. In the long line of Israel's kings there was none of whom it could be said that he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. Jeroboam was of the dynasty of Jehu, but he followed in the evil ways of the dynasty of Omri and Ahab that Jehu overthrew.

25. Coast. Literally, "boundary." Jeroboam restored the nation to its original borders.

The entering of Hamath. This expression is used to designate the northern limit of the nation (see on Num. 34:8; see also Joshua 13:5; Judges 3:3; 1 Kings 8:65; and Amos 6:14). Ezekiel also set Hamath as the northern limit of the state (Eze. 47:16; 48:1). Under the reign of Solomon the nation reached this region as its boundary (2 Chron. 8:3, 4).

Sea of the plain. The Dead Sea (see Num. 34:12; Deut. 3:17; 4:49; Joshua 3:16). The territory east of the Jordan had been lost to Israel during the reigns of Jehu (2 Kings 10:32, 33) and Jehoahaz (2 Kings 13:3, 25), and was partially recovered by Jehoash (2 Kings 13:25).

Jonah. This is the prophet who was sent to Nineveh (Jonah 1:1, 2). Jonah had a wider ministry than the book of Jonah records. The observation here made that the ministry of Jonah occurred during the reign of Jeroboam II enables us to fix the approximate date of the incidents recorded in the book of Jonah.

According to the tentative chronology employed in this commentary, the kings who reigned over Assyria during the reign of Jeroboam II are Adad-nirari III, 810–782; Shalmaneser IV, 782–772; Ashur-dan III, 772–754; and Ashur-nirari V, 754–746 (see p. 77).

Gath-hepher. A place in the borders of Zebulun (Joshua 19:13), 2 3/4 mi. (4.4 km.) north by east of Nazareth. An alleged tomb of Jonah is still exhibited there. The site now bears the name *Khirbet ez-Zurrâ'* in the modern Arabic.

26. Saw the affliction. God does not permit the fires of affliction to burn any hotter than is necessary to consume the dross. If His children respond to mild chastisements, severer judgments become unnecessary. On the other hand, a persistent refusal to repent under the easier tests requires that each successive affliction come with increased intensity. This was the case with Israel. The minor calamities had been insufficient to accomplish any lasting reformation, and the nation, by its continued course of rebellion, was rapidly approaching the ultimate doom of complete national destruction. It appears that the temporary alleviation under Jeroboam was designed to give a demonstration of what God was willing to do even at this late hour for the rebellious nation. It was not yet too late, but the limits of divine forbearance had almost been reached; the end was hastening on apace.

The period was one of intense prophetic activity. In times of crisis and need God provides special divine direction. In addition to the prophetic utterances of Jonah, the prophecies of Hosea and Amos fell in this period. The messages of these books throw additional light on the conditions of the times.

Any shut up, nor any left. The exact meaning of this phrase is not clear. It seems to denote that the widespread calamity was to be upon all classes (see Deut. 32:36; 1 Kings

14:10; 2 Kings 9:8). The two ideas may be in antithesis to each other, meaning, “him that is shut up and him that is loose,” or “him that is bound and him that is free.”

27. *Said not.* God had as yet given no fiat for the destruction of Israel. On the contrary, He designed the temporary prosperity to be a strong inducement to Israel to return to Him. The restored boundaries were to be a foretaste of future blessings on condition of obedience. The writer seems to have had in mind Deut. 32:36–43. The time had not yet come for the Lord to blot out their “name from under heaven” (Deut. 29:20).

Saved them. This prosperity came despite Jeroboam’s wickedness (see v. 24). The wicked never know to what extent they owe their blessings to the prospering hand of God. The victories were no indication that God approved of the course of either king or people. Instead, these victories were God’s renewed invitation to His people to return to the original purpose of their calling.

28. *All that he did.* Jeroboam did much to strengthen his nation, but the record of his reign is brief. National success was followed by national pride, which contemporary prophets strongly condemned (Hosea 5:5; 7:10; Amos 6:13).

Recovered Damascus, and Hamath. This statement points to the northward extent of the kingdom of Judah at this time. Damascus was brought under the control of Israel by David (2 Sam. 8:6) and continued to be part of the empire of Solomon (1 Kings 11:23, 24). The kingdom of Solomon also included Hamath (2 Chron. 8:4). It is not clear whether the town or district of Hamath is meant (see on v. 25). The town of Hamath is about 120 mi. north of Damascus (see *The Empire of David and Solomon*). Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria (745–727 B.C.) claimed that he brought under his power “19 districts of Hamath, together with the cities of their environs ... which had gone over to Azriau.” This Azriau was probably Azariah, or Uzziah, of Judah, although there has been some dispute among scholars as to the identification (see on 2 Kings 16:5).

If this statement refers to Azariah of Judah, it assigns to Judah the control of the territory of Hamath at the time of Tiglath-pileser’s campaign. It seems that Israel and Judah were vying for control of this northern area, with Jeroboam at one time, at least, being successful in wresting the control from his rival to the south. Judah later must have regained control, for Tiglath-pileser’s campaign against this territory came in 743 B.C., 10 years after the death of Jeroboam, according to the chronology employed in this commentary. It has been suggested that the interest of Judah in these northern areas may have been associated with Assyrian activities there. It may be that Azariah of Judah played a leading role in a western coalition against Assyrian aggression, and that the smaller states of northern Syria acknowledged him as overlord—or at least that Azariah claimed that rank—in return for his help in meeting the Assyrian aggressor. Israel probably resented this interest of Judah in states lying north of its border and at one time during Jeroboam’s reign succeeded in gaining the upper hand.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

21, 22 PK 303
5

CHAPTER 15

⁵Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (2 Ki 9:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

1 *Azariah's good reign.* 5 *He dying a leper, Jotham succeedeth.* 8 *Zachariah, the last of Jehu's generation, reigning ill, is slain by Shallum.* 13 *Shallum, reigning a month, is slain by Menahem.* 16 *Menahem strengtheneth himself by Pul.* 21 *Pekahiah succeedeth him.* 23 *Pekahiah is slain by Pekah.* 27 *Pekah is oppressed by Tiglath-pileser, and slain by Hoshea.* 32 *Jotham's good reign.* 36 *Ahaz succeedeth him.*

1. Azariah. The name is also given as Uzziah (vs. 13, 30, 32, 34). This shorter form is used in Chronicles (except in the genealogy of David, 1 Chron. 3:12), and in Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, and Zechariah. This is one of many examples of variant forms of names.

3. That which was right. Only during part of his reign (see on v. 5). "As long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper" (2 Chron. 26:5).

4. Not removed. Not all the high places were necessarily idolatrous shrines. They were, however, unauthorized places of worship where the people offered their sacrifices rather than at the Temple in Jerusalem (see on ch. 12:3).

5. Smote the king. For a fuller account of this incident see 2 Chron. 26:16–21. Azariah was evidently lifted up by pride because of his successes in war. While endeavoring to offer incense in the Temple he was smitten with leprosy.

Several house. That is, a separate house. Hebrew law required that lepers should dwell alone, "without the camp" (Lev. 13:46).

Over the house. Jotham became regent, ruling the nation from the time that his father was smitten with leprosy.

Judging the people. The king was the supreme judge of the land. Jotham now assumed all the responsibilities of kingship in the place of his father, although the latter continued to be reckoned as reigning.

6. Rest of the acts. Among these are Azariah's successes in war against the Philistines, Arabians, and Meunim, the extension of his power over Ammon, the strengthening of the fortifications of Jerusalem, his interest in cattle breeding and agriculture, the building of protective towers in desert areas, the reorganization and re-equipment of his army, the construction of engines for shooting weapons, his endeavor to offer incense in the Temple, resulting in the stroke of leprosy, and the details of his burial (2 Chron. 26:1–23).

7. Azariah slept. Isaiah received his vision of God in the year of Azariah's death (see on v. 1; cf. Isa. 6:1, 8).

A few years ago a well-carved stone slab was found at Jerusalem which bears the inscription, "Hither were brought the bones of Uzziah [Azariah], king of Judah. Not to be opened!" Since the inscription is written in the Aramaic square script in use at the time of Christ, the slab must have been prepared at that time. It probably marked the spot to which Uzziah's bones were taken after his original tomb had been looted and had otherwise fallen into ruin.

8. Six months. Israel was now entering upon the last dark period of its history. King followed king in rapid succession, with assassinations being the usual practice of the times.

9. That which was evil. This is all that is recorded of the last king of the house of Jehu. Iniquity was the order of the day, and was soon to ruin the nation.

10. Shallum. Nothing is known of Shallum's ancestry. The fathers' name offers no clue.

Before the people. Heb. *qabal-‘am*. This Hebrew phrase is not translated in some of the Greek manuscripts, which, however, add the name *Keblaam* after Jabesh. A later version reads *en Ieblaam*, “in Ibleam” (see ch. 9:27). The Hebrew suggests that the assassination was carried out in public. The procedure is an indication of the terrible corruption and uncertainty of the times. Human life was cheap and blood flowed freely. In the death of Zachariah the prediction was fulfilled, that the Lord would “avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu” (Hosea 1:4); also the forecast that God would “rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword” (Amos 7:9).

12. The word of the Lord. See 2 Kings 10:30. The descendants of Jehu who ruled over Israel were Jehoahaz, Jehoash, Jeroboam, and Zachariah.

13. A full month. Literally, “a month of days.” Shallum was a murderer, and by a murderer his blood was shed after only a month upon the throne. When men forsake the law of the Lord, life is not safe or happy for king or people. Men sensed the evils of the times, but they tried to correct evil with evil. As a result the situation went from bad to worse till the whole nation was engulfed in ruin.

14. Tirzah. The early capital of Israel from Jeroboam to Omri (1 Kings 14:17; 16:8, 9, 15, 17, 23). The exact location is not known, but the place is probably to be identified with *Tell el-Fâr‘ah*, a large mound 6 1/2 mi. (10.4 km.) northeast of Shechem where the French have carried out excavations since 1946.

Slew him. Josephus claims that Menahem was the general of the army (*Antiquities* ix. 11. 1). Men in those days were eager for power and hesitated at nothing to secure their ends. It was a time when the judgments of God were abroad in the land. The commandments of the Lord had been rejected, and now the commandments of men were of little worth (see GC 584).

16. Tiphseh. This is hardly the city by this name mentioned by Solomon in 1 Kings 4:24, for that city, the well-known Thapsacus, was on the Euphrates River. Menahem would hardly have occasion to make his way to so distant a place at this time. The mention of the city in connection with Tirzah has led to the belief that the two cities were near to each other. Some identify Tephseh with *Khirbet Tafsa*, a village 7 1/4 mi. (11.6 km.) west-southwest of Shechem. Others follow Lucian’s recension, which reads *Taphoe*, and identify it with Tappuah, now *Sheikh Abu Zarad*, about 7 7/8 mi. (12.6 km.) southwest of Shechem.

They opened not. Menahem made an example of the city that refused to give its loyalty to him.

Ripped up. Such savage cruelty was typical of the barbarous customs of the times (see 2 Kings 8:12; Hosea 13:16; Amos 1:13).

18. Departed not. The change from one dynasty to another brought no improvement. The nation needed, not a change of kings, but of heart.

19. Pul. From a comparison of Babylonian and Assyrian documents, most modern scholars conclude that “Pul” was simply another name for Tiglath-pileser III (see pp. 61, 156–159; see also on 1 Chron. 5:26).

Thousand talents. Such a weight of silver, calculated on the basis of the light shekel, would today be worth more than one million dollars. The Assyrian inscriptions tell of Tiglath-pileser’s overwhelming “Menihimme of Samerina,” or “Menahem of Samaria,”

and imposing upon him tribute of gold, silver, and linen garments (see pp. 84, 159). Decades before this Adad-nirari III had secured from the king of Damascus 2,300 talents of silver and 20 talents of gold.

20. Of each man. A talent of silver was equal to 3,000 shekels. This special tax upon the men of wealth would thus involve 60,000 persons. Greed for gain, with its accompanying luxurious living and oppression of the poor, was one of the great evils of the day, and was constantly denounced by the prophets (see Amos 2:6; 3:15; 5:11, 12; 6:4; 8:6).

22. Pekahiah. Of the last five kings of Israel, Pekahiah was the only one to succeed his father on the throne. All the others secured the kingship through assassination of their predecessors.

24. That which was evil. This brief statement constitutes the extent of the record of the reign of this king of Israel. It was an age when men had given themselves over completely to iniquity. The Lord's calls to repentance fell upon deaf ears. Although the Lord had long been patient with Israel, divine judgment was soon to fall on them.

25. Captain. Heb. *shalish*. Literally, "third." Perhaps an officer of some importance (see on Ex. 14:7). In the case of Joram the *shalish* was evidently the king's aide, spoken of as the "lord on whose hand the king leaned" (see on 2 Kings 7:2). When Jehu slew Joram, Bidkar, his *shalish*, was ordered to dispose of the body of the fallen king (ch. 9:24, 25).

Argob and Arieih. The meaning of these words is not clear. The names may be those of either men or places.

Fifty men. Probably members of the royal guard who conspired with Pekah against the life of Pekahiah.

26. The rest of the acts. The accounts of the lives of these wicked kings is fortunately brief. Their deeds were evil, and there would be little of edification in passing on to posterity the records of their many iniquities.

27. Pekah. For the synchronism of Pekah's accession and the period covered by his reign see pp. 85, 150.

29. Came Tiglath-pileser. This was probably toward the close of Pekah's reign, for Tiglath-pileser declares that the people of Israel "overthrew their king Pekah" and claims he placed Hoshea the son of Elah over them as king.

Ijon, and Abel-beth-maachah. Cities near the border of Naphtali, in the extreme north. They are among those smitten by Benhadad during the reign of Baasha (1 Kings 15:20). The first city may be the site *Tell ed-Dibbîn*, and the second, *Tell Abil* (see on 1 Kings 15:20).

Janoah. In northern Israel, unidentified.

Kedesh. A town 4 mi. (6.4 km.) northwest of former Lake Huleh, taken by Joshua (Joshua 12:22), and assigned to the tribe of Naphtali (Joshua 19:37). It is usually called Kedesh-naphtali (see Judges 4:6) to distinguish it from other towns by the same name.

The site of Kedesh is now known as *Tell Qades*.

Hazor. *Tell Waqqâs*, 3.8 mi. (6.1 km.) southwest of the former Lake Huleh.

Land of Naphtali. The affliction referred to in Isa. 9:1 which the Lord brought on Zebulun and Naphtali is probably the incursion of Tiglath-pileser here mentioned.

Carried them captive. The Assyrians customarily transported captives from conquered territories in the endeavor to discourage revolts. The captivity here mentioned was the first of a series that ended only when both Israel and Judah were completely consumed. The judgments fulfilled the prediction of Moses (Deut. 28:37, 64, 65). The “Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh” were also carried away by Tiglath-pileser (1 Chron. 5:26).

30. Made a conspiracy. Tiglath-pileser III claims that it was he who placed Hoshea upon the throne of Israel (see on v. 29). Probably Hoshea was forced to recognize the suzerainty of the Assyrian king before he was permitted to take the throne in Israel.

The twentieth year of Jotham. See on v. 33.

32. The second year. After the record of the reign of Azariah, the Biblical account continues with the reigns of five kings of Israel, all of whom came to the throne during Azariah’s reign. The last of these, Pekah, began to reign in the 52d year of Azariah (v. 27), the year of Azariah’s death (v. 2). Hence the record now returns to Judah and the reign of Jotham, who succeeded his father Azariah.

To reign. Jotham had begun to bear the burdens of state when Uzziah was smitten with leprosy and was forced to live in a house by himself (v. 5).

33. Sixteen years. For a comparison of this statement with the record of Hoshea’s accession in Jotham’s twentieth year (v. 30) see p. 150.

34. Which was right. During the years when Israel was ruled by kings who came to the throne by murder and filled their reign with evil, Judah was in large part blessed by descendants of the line of David who feared God and were faithful to Him.

35. Higher gate. Probably the same as the “high gate of Benjamin” (Jer. 20:2). Ezekiel’s six men with their “slaughter” weapons came by way of “the higher gate, which lieth toward the north” (Eze. 9:2).

36. Rest of the acts. Some of these are recorded in 2 Chron. 27:3–6.

37. Rezin the king of Syria. The Rezin-Pekah alliance, begun in the reign of Jotham, continued and came to its head under Ahaz (ch. 16:7–9; Isa. 7:1). It is thought that the events now taking place in Judah and Israel and the nations round about were closely related to Assyrian activities in the Mediterranean area. Tiglath-pileser was aggressive, and probably decided to bring all territories in the Westland under the Assyrian yoke.

Rezin is mentioned in Tiglath-pileser’s inscriptions as *Rahianu* of Damascus.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–4PK 303

5 PK 304

18–30PK 287

34, 35 PK 305

CHAPTER 16

1 *Ahaz’s wicked reign.* 5 *Ahaz, assailed by Rezin and Pekah, hireth Tiglath-pileser against them.* 10 *Ahaz, sending a pattern of an altar from Damascus to Urijah, diverteth the brasen altar to his own devotion.* 17 *He spoileth the temple.* 19 *Hezekiah succeedeth him.*

2. Did not ... right. The majority of the rulers of Judah had been relatively upright kings; from now on many were evil. The reign of Ahaz marked the beginning of the nation’s final decline. Efforts were made by Hezekiah and Josiah to stay the tide of iniquity, but the effects were only temporary. A nation cannot long endure without

righteousness and without good leadership. Evil men automatically bring about their own ruin.

3. Of the kings of Israel. Ahaz “made ... images for Baalim” (2 Chron. 28:2), thus imitating the practices of Ahab and Jezebel in Israel.

Pass through the fire. “Burnt his children in the fire” (2 Chron. 28:3). Such abominations were common among the nations of Palestine (Deut. 12:31; 2 Kings 3:27). Manasseh was guilty of the same outrage (2 Kings 21:6). The practice was continued in the days of Jeremiah (Jer. 7:31). These terrible rites were forbidden the Israelites under the penalty of death (Lev. 18:21; 20:2).

5. Came up. See 2 Kings 15:37; Isa. 7:1. The object of this bold invasion was to install a new dynasty in Jerusalem and to bring an end to the dynasty of David (Isa. 7:6). Assyrian sources indicate that Azariah took a strong stand against Assyria, if “Azariau of Iauda” is to be identified with Azariah of Judah (see on 2 Kings 14:28). This policy of resistance was probably continued under Jotham. At the time of Ahaz, however, it seems that a pro-Assyrian policy was adopted. Israel and Syria may have attacked Ahaz because of his pro-Assyrian tendencies. Through the prophet Isaiah the Lord sent messages of encouragement to Ahaz, informing him that Israel and Syria would ultimately fail in their attack against the kingdom of Judah (Isa. 7:4–7; 8:4).

Could not overcome. Israel and Syria did, however, succeed in taking many captives (2 Chron. 28:5–8). In addition to this trouble from the north the Edomites in the south and the Philistines in the west harassed Judah (2 Chron. 28:17, 18). Some suggest that the states of the Mediterranean seacoast had entered into a confederacy against Assyria and were taking concerted measures against Ahaz because of his refusal to join them in resisting the encroachments of that rising power.

6. Recovered Elath. See on ch. 14:22.

Jews. Heb. *Yehudim*, from *Yehudah* (Judah), one of the 12 sons of Jacob. This is the first occurrence of the word in the Scriptures. The term is applied at first only to the citizens of the southern kingdom of Judah. After the captivity it is used to designate all who returned to Palestine irrespective of tribal affiliations (Ezra 4:12; Neh. 1:2). By the time of the Christian Era the name comprehends any descendant of Jacob (Matt. 2:2).

7. Sent messengers. Ahaz took this step against the advice of the prophet Isaiah, who encouraged him to place his trust in God and not in man (Isa. 7:7–13; 8:13).

Save me. Such a cry should have been addressed only to the God of heaven. The direction of the petition to Tiglath-pileser was a sad reflection on Ahaz’ lack of faith in God. The Lord had repeatedly promised to deliver His people in time of affliction. Isaiah urged the king to place his confidence in God and not in man, but Ahaz refused to hear the advice of the prophet.

8. Silver and gold. Ahaz divested the Temple of its treasures and bestowed the dedicated wealth upon a heathen king. He was willing to bind himself by an alliance to a pagan ruler and to disassociate himself from the Ruler of heaven.

9. Hearkened unto him. Perhaps the first benefit resulting from this alliance was an Assyrian attack upon Philistia which, according to the Assyrian Eponym Canon, or limmu list (see pp. 55, 155), occurred in the year 734 B.C.

Against Damascus. According to the Assyrian Eponym Canon the campaign took two years, 733 and 732. According to Assyrian sources the city of Damascus was taken in 732.

Kir. The exact location of this place is not known. According to Isa. 22:6 it was probably in or near the territory of Elam. Elam was a region east of Babylon bounded on the north by Assyria. The Assyrians frequently transported captives across the whole breadth of their empire. Amos had foretold that the Syrians would go into captivity to Kir (Amos 1:5).

10. To Damascus. The occasion was probably to celebrate Tiglath-pileser's triumph in Damascus after his capture of the city. Perhaps all the tributary kings of Western Asia were summoned there to give their homage and pay their tribute to the Assyrian ruler.

An altar. Whether a Syrian or an Assyrian altar the writer does not reveal, but in view of Tiglath-pileser's recent victories it was probably Assyrian (see on v. 12). The heathen altar, dedicated to the worship of some heathen god, captured the fancy of the king of Judah. Most scholars agree that Tiglath-pileser required Ahaz to erect an Assyrian altar and offer sacrifices on it as a token of submission to the gods of Assyria. This was a common requirement made of vassal kings.

Urijah. This may have been the Uriah who placed his signature on Isaiah's "great roll" (Isa. 8:1, 2).

11. Built an altar. This was a shocking deed for a priest of God. The priesthood was dedicated to the service of God, not to the service of idols, and yet this priest of the Lord built a heathen altar that was to take the place of the sacred altar of God in the Temple.

12. Offered thereon. An act of brazen effrontery to the God of heaven. According to 2 Chron. 28:23 Ahaz had previously "sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him: and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me." Now that the Syrian gods had failed to deliver Syria out of the hands of Tiglath-pileser, Ahaz evidently regarded the Assyrian gods as the more powerful and henceforth was ready to give them homage.

Such warped thinking on the part of the king of Judah illustrates the extent to which God's original plan for Israel had failed. It was God's purpose through the nation of Israel to give a demonstration of the absolute superiority of the God of Israel that would eventually lead all nations to seek after the God of the Hebrews. The very opposite effect resulted from the defection of Israel's kings. Neighboring nations were led to regard with disdain the God who according to their interpretation had repeatedly shown Himself inferior to the gods of Israel's conquerors (see Ex. 32:12; Num. 14:13; Deut. 9:28; Ps. 79:10).

13. He burnt. Ahaz himself officiated as priest. Only a short time before, the priests had resisted Azariah when he endeavored to burn incense in the Temple, and the king was smitten with leprosy for his attempt to assume this priestly prerogative (2 Chron. 26:16–19). Now the priest made a heathen altar in response to the command of the king and he permitted the king to officiate as priest, as was the custom in heathen lands. The nation was rapidly declining.

14. The brazen altar. The brazen altar had formerly occupied the honored position directly in front of the Temple porch. The new altar had apparently been placed between the brazen altar and the east gate. This would cause the brazen altar to obstruct the view of the Temple. Probably for this reason it was removed from its ancient position and placed to the north of the new altar, between it and the north wall of the Temple court.

15. The great altar. The new altar took the place of Solomon's brazen altar. It is called "great," probably not with reference to size, for it may have been much smaller

than Solomon's altar of huge dimensions (2 Chron. 4:1), but from the standpoint of its function. The new altar was now to supersede the old one for many of the principal offerings prescribed by the Mosaic code (see Ex. 29:38–42; Num. 28:3–31; 29:2–39).

Brasen altar. The designation "brasen" may imply that the new altar was of different material, probably stone.

Enquire. Heb. *baqar*, "to inquire," "to seek," "to look for." The passage may be understood in two ways. It may mean that Ahaz was going to look into the matter as to what use was to be made of the brazen altar; or it may apply specifically to the use of the altar for divination. Some have suggested that Ahaz had adopted the Babylonian custom of divination by means of omen-sacrifices in which the will of the gods was ascertained by examining the entrails of sacrificial animals (see Eze. 21:21–23).

17. Cut off. Ahaz probably needed the bronze as a present for the king of Assyria (v. 18). He was obviously hard pressed and forced to secure metal wherever he could.

Borders of the bases. These "bases" were the stands for the ten brazen lavers built by Solomon (1 Kings 7:27–39). The borders were probably ornamental panelings. The bases themselves were not destroyed, for when Jerusalem was taken by Nebuchadnezzar these were among the items taken to Babylon (2 Kings 25:13, 16; Jer. 52:17, 20).

The sea. See 1 Kings 7:23–26. The great bronze laver itself was not destroyed, but was simply removed from the brazen oxen upon which it rested. When Jerusalem fell, this laver was broken up and taken to Babylon (Jer. 52:17) as a part of the booty.

18. Covert for the sabbath. Exactly what is meant by this expression is not clear. It was probably some covered hall or stand used on the Sabbath by honored guests—perhaps the king and members of the royal court. This is the only instance where this structure is mentioned anywhere in the Bible.

King's entry. The meaning of this expression is not clear. Some have thought that the reference is to the ascent by which the king went up into the house of the Lord (1 Kings 10:5). The entire verse is obscure in the Hebrew. The LXX renders it: "And he made a base for the throne in the house of the Lord, and he turned the king's entrance without in the house of the Lord because of the king of the Assyrians." Some think that Ahaz anticipated a visit to Jerusalem by Tiglath-pileser and was making preparations to receive him.

19. The rest of the acts. Among the other acts of Ahaz were the erection of altars on the roof of the palace (ch. 23:12), apparently designed for the worship of the host of heaven; the cutting in pieces of the sacred vessels of the Temple; the shutting up of the Temple itself and the termination of its services (2 Chron. 28:24; 29:3, 7).

20. Was buried. Not in the sepulchers of the kings, according to the parallel account (2 Chron. 28:27).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–20PK 322–330

1 PK 322

3 PK 324

5 PK 328

7, 8 PK 329

CHAPTER 17

1 *Hoshea's wicked reign.* 3 *Being subdued by Shalmaneser, he conspireth against him with So king of Egypt.* 5 *Samaria for their sins is captivated.* 24 *The strange nations, which were transplanted in Samaria, being plagued with lions, make a mixture of religions.*

1. *Began Hoshea.* For the chronology of Hoshea's reign see p. 150. Tigleth-pileser III claimed to have placed Hoshea on the throne after Pekah had been overthrown by the people of Israel, and to have received from him 10 talents of gold and 1,000 talents of silver as tribute. This evidently means that Hoshea, after having overthrown Pekah, made his peace with the Assyrian king and acknowledged his authority. Tiglath-pileser was then engaged in a series of wars in the west—in 734 B.C. against Philistia and in 733 and 732 against Damascus. Ahaz of Judah had recently sent a delegation to Tiglath-pileser to purchase his aid against Pekah and Rezin (ch. 16:7–9), and Hoshea would thus also be forced to recognize the overlordship of Assyria before taking the throne in Israel. His revolt against Pekah may have been made with the connivance and support of the Assyrian king.

2. *Not as the kings.* Hoshea did not distinguish himself for wickedness as had some of the kings before him. If he had engaged in active measures of reform, the nation might have been saved even at that late hour. God is merciful and long-suffering, but after iniquity has reached a certain limit and divine warnings have been repeatedly spurned, judgments fall. Hoshea apparently did nothing to stay the coming of judgment.

3. *Shalmaneser.* Shalmaneser V began to reign in 727 B.C. Little is known of his reign because of the mutilated condition of the records.

Became his servant. Hoshea had acknowledged Tiglath-pileser as an overlord and rendered tribute to him. He continued this course when Shalmaneser came to the throne.

4. *Found conspiracy.* The contemporary prophet Hosea derided the fickleness of Israel in its foreign policies at this time, its leaning now to Assyria and then to Egypt (Hosea 5:13; 7:8, 11, 16; 8:9; 11:5; 12:1; 14:3).

So king of Egypt. This was during the time of the Twenty-third Dynasty of Egypt, a period when the nation was weak and when a number of monarchs were ruling simultaneously in various parts of the land. The Egyptian ruler "So" may be a certain *Sib'u*, referred to by Sargon as "the tartan of Egypt." An Egyptian object (*ushebtî*) in the Berlin Museum contains a royal cartouche with the name *šb'u*, revealing that there must have been an ephemeral king by that name in Egypt (see p. 52).

Brought no present. Hoshea seems to have sadly misjudged the trend of international politics. Assyria at this time was the great power of the world and was destined to become even stronger. Egypt was little more than a name, and was in the period of its final decline. In stopping his payment of tribute to Assyria, Hoshea provoked the grievous chastisement that was to follow.

5. *Besieged it.* Shalmaneser began a three-year siege (see on ch. 18:9, 10).

6. *Took Samaria.* The Bible mentions Shalmaneser as beginning the siege, but does not name the king who *took* the city. The Babylonian Chronicle states that the city Shamarrin (probably Samaria) fell during the reign of Shalmaneser, but his successor, Sargon II, made the claim, in documents written toward the close of his reign, that he himself captured the city of Samaria at the beginning of his reign. If this claim is true, then it could have been in the capacity of commanding general of the Assyrian armies and not as king that he effected the capture of the city. Historians differ, but there seems

to be reasonable evidence for its fall in the latter part of Shalmaneser's reign (see pp. 62, 85, 160).

Habor. The region of the river Khabur, the great tributary of the Euphrates about 130 mi. west of Nineveh. Both Habor and Halah are mentioned in 1 Chron. 5:26 as localities where Tiglath-pileser settled the captives taken by him. Gozan is identified with Guzanu, a site on the northern Khabur. This site, now called *Tell Halaf*, has been excavated by the Germans and has yielded many objects of great importance. Halah's site is unknown.

Medes. Media lay to the northeast of Assyria. For some time before this Assyria had been engaged in conflicts with the Medes. The campaign of the year 737 B.C. was against Media.

7. For so it was, that. Literally, "and it was because," or "and it came to pass because." The writer proceeds to set forth the various reasons for which God permitted Israel to be smitten by their enemies and to be carried into captivity.

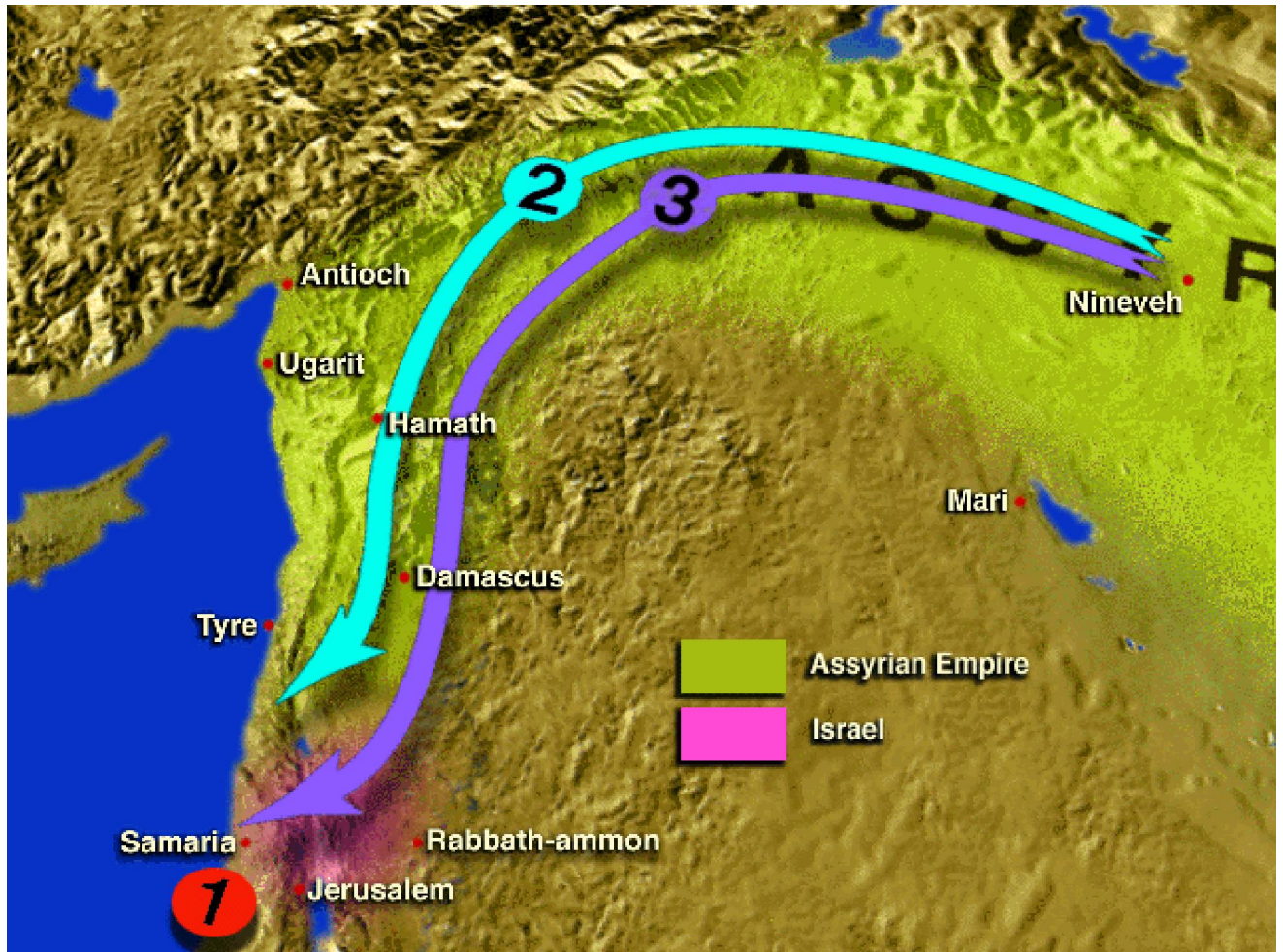
Israel had sinned. This was the primary reason for Israel's downfall. Sin was responsible for our first parents' expulsion from Eden, and it is the reason for all the woe that has since come upon the human race. Man has no greater enemy than sin. It destroys what it touches, be it a man, a nation, or a world.

Brought them up. Common courtesy would demand that the Israelites show respect for Him who had shown so great kindness to them. They could hardly display baser ingratitude than to forget God's mercy and goodness. Idolatry involved infinitely more guilt among the Hebrews than among other peoples, for the heathen had only a limited degree of enlightenment and had not experienced the wonderful blessings that God had bestowed on His chosen people. The Israelites knew by their own personal experience that God was kind and beneficent, and yet in spite of all this they turned away from Him to the worship of false gods.

Conquest of Israel by Assyria

6

⁶Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (2 Ki 15:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.



8. The Lord cast out. The native peoples of Canaan were cast out before Israel because of their abominable customs and gross immoralities. The Israelites could hardly have displayed greater stupidity than to follow the same practices. As the native inhabitants of Palestine were doomed because of their evil ways, so likewise was Israel.

Of the kings of Israel. The rulers of Israel were responsible for leading their people into sin. They introduced and encouraged the worship of such false gods as Baal, and turned the people from the worship of Jehovah to the most corrupt forms of worship. Nevertheless, the people were not thereby without excuse. Men are held responsible individually for their acts. The wrongdoing of the leader provides no excuse for the followers to adopt the same sinful course.

However, the Israelites were largely dependent upon oral instruction. Copies of the Law were rare, and few, if any, were privileged to have the Holy Scriptures in their homes. The people received their knowledge of the will of God through the priests and other religious leaders. If these spiritual instructors were themselves teaching and practicing evil, the natural result would be for those under their charge to follow the same course. The majority of the Israelites lacked a personal religious experience. The religion of the masses consisted largely of following a system of worship imposed by superior authority.

The situation is entirely altered today. Copies of the Bible are universally available. Men are no longer dependent, as formerly, upon instruction from others to ascertain the will of God. They are now urged to study the truth for themselves and counseled not to accept any teaching unless they themselves have verified it by their own research and found it supported by inspiration. Despite the new situation, many still determine their course of conduct by the beliefs and practices of those whom they regard their religious superiors. Such a course is fraught with grave danger. Those who follow a human criterion do so at their own risk. If they are lost they will be without excuse.

On the other hand, those who are responsible for leading them astray are also guilty before God. It is their responsibility, in view of the tendency of others to imitate them, to make their lives exemplary in every way, and at the same time urge all to seek an experience for themselves and to follow only the one perfect pattern, Jesus Christ.

9. *Did secretly.* The Israelites were perfidious and deceitful in carrying on their iniquities. Often there was an outward show of religion and respectability, covering their base and immoral practices with a cloak of dissimulation. Pretending to serve Jehovah, they were actually engaging in practices that were directly contrary to the principles of His kingdom.

High places. At these centers gross forms of immorality often accompanied idolatrous worship (see Deut. 12:2, 3; Isa. 57:5–7; Jer. 2:20; 3:2). The native fertility cults of the land involved the worshipers in most shameful practices.

From the tower. The expression thus introduced signifies extent from one end of the country to the other (see ch. 18:8). There were towers for watchmen in the most remote sections, out in the fields, for purposes of protection; and there were large walled cities. The meaning is that the high places were established everywhere, in remote rural areas as well as in the great centers of population.

10. *Images.* Heb. *maṣṣeboth* (see on Deut. 16:22).

Groves. Heb. *’asherim* (see on Judges 3:7). “Groves” is a misleading translation, for “groves” were placed “under every green tree” (1 Kings 14:23). They were poles, cultic symbols of the goddess Asherah.

11. *Provoke the Lord.* God is not provoked as man is provoked (see on ch. 13:3). He hates sin, but He loves the sinner (SC 59). The judgments, terrible as they were, had a wise and merciful purpose (PK 292).

12. *Idols.* Heb. *gillulim*, “logs,” “blocks,” “shapeless things.” There are 12 Hebrew words translated “idol” in the OT. Each considers the false god from a different aspect, such as being a thing of vanity, or nought, a cause of trembling or grief, etc. *Gillulim* describes idols with respect to their shape (see Deut. 29:17; 1 Kings 15:12; 21:26; 2 Kings 23:24; Eze. 6:9; 16:36).

13. *Testified.* Heb. *’ud*. This word may also be translated “to exhort solemnly,” “to reiterate,” “to charge.” The warnings were often severe, but their purpose was to help the people sense the danger of their evil ways and turn them from their iniquities. If they did not turn, they at least would not be able justly to blame God for their fate. None of the captives could say, If only I had known that this would be the outcome of my sinful course, I would have reformed. Thus God’s justice would be fully vindicated, an important element in God’s dealings with men. Testimonies from heaven perform a

similar function today. Never has God more earnestly instructed His people and more solemnly warned them (see Rev. 3:14–22). Those who fail will be without excuse.

Turn ye. This was something God could not do for His people. God invites, pleads, presents inducements, and urges, but He never coerces. If men do not yield the will, there is nothing that God can do for them to effect their salvation. God had done all He could for Israel. “What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?” (Isa. 5:4). The next step must be taken by the people.

14. Hardened their necks. This was a common Hebrew expression denoting unbending obstinacy and stubborn self-will (Deut. 10:16; 2 Chron. 30:8; 36:13; Neh. 9:16, 17, 29; Prov. 29:1; Jer. 7:26; 17:23; 19:15). The Israelites were often termed a “stiffnecked people” (Ex. 32:9; 33:3, 5; 34:9; Deut. 9:6, 13). This perverseness and obstinacy proved to be their ruin.

Did not believe. This is an interesting statement in the midst of a discussion that seems to lay such great emphasis on conduct. Many claim that faith was not required in the religion of the OT. It is true that this grace was almost wholly lacking in the experience of the majority, but this was not because God designed it to be so. Faith was as essential to a true religious experience in pre-Christian times as now. Many fail to understand the true relationship between faith and works. It is impossible to divorce faith from works.

The objective of God’s plan is to restore fully men’s characters to the original perfection of Adam in Eden. This can be accomplished only through a combination of faith and works. Any religion that lays stress on faith to the exclusion of works thereby denies the objective of faith and offers to men a substitute experience. Works cannot save, but the saved man will perform good works.

It takes time to develop mature faith. If Israel had been willing, God would have led them on to the heights of faith found in NT times. The people failed because they “did not believe.” “The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it” (Heb. 4:2).

15. Followed vanity. When a man rejects the law and admonition of the Lord, he shows himself to be not wise but foolish; for he exchanges heaven’s greatest treasures for vanity and nothingness. Little did the Israelites realize the depths of their folly in rejecting God and His statutes and in walking in the ways of evil. They were throwing away their kingdom and all their prospects for happiness and peace for a mere puff of wind. Seeking after things of nought, they became nought.

16. All the commandments. Sin grows like a cancer. When a person begins to disobey one of the commands of the Lord, he soon will find himself venturing farther into pathways of disobedience. When the Israelites turned from God and began serving idols, they soon found themselves breaking all the commandments of the Lord. A contemporary prophet decried their defections, “There is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood” (Hosea 4:1, 2).

Molten images. This verse enumerates the various types of idolatry to which Israel had fallen a prey. There were few gods then worshiped in Palestine which did not also have some worshipers among the people of Israel. On the golden calves of Jeroboam at Dan and Bethel see 1 Kings 12:28–30; on the “grove,” Heb. *’asherah*, made by Ahab see 1 Kings 16:33.

17. Pass through the fire. These were sacrifices in which children were consumed by the flames (see on Deut. 18:10; 32:17; 2 Kings 16:3). The indictment of Judah was similar (Jer. 19:5).

Divination. This refers to the various methods by which men endeavored to ascertain the will of the gods or to secure from them secret information.

Enchantments. These consisted of various types of necromancy and witchcraft.

Sold themselves. Those who engaged in these iniquitous practices became the servants of the demoniacal powers back of the occult and mysterious rites. Instead of being servants of God they were henceforth slaves of Satan. They found the evil one to be anything but a kind master (see 1 Kings 21:20).

18. Very angry. See on ch. 13:3.

19. Also Judah. The fate of Israel should have served as a warning to Judah. Though now spared, the national transgression of the southern kingdom, unless checked, would result in the same national ruin that had come to Israel.

Which they made. The customs that the Israelites introduced and that were followed by Judah (see ch. 16:3).

20. All the seed. This ultimately included Judah as well as Israel.

Delivered them. This was a national judgment and must not be confused with a sentence sealing the individual destinies of those who comprised the nation of Israel at the time of the removal into captivity. The personal relationship of each citizen to God remained as it had been prior to the visitation of the judgment. God deals with individuals and with nations in two spheres of relationship, each largely independent of the other. The judgment upon Israel was the loss of her status as a nation. It is true that many suffered personally because of the national catastrophe, but piety often thrives under conditions of adversity, so that in the end the calamity actually worked for the good of the individual. On God's controlling the destiny of nations see Ed 173–179; Isa. 10:5–12; Hab. 1:6–11.

21. Drave Israel. Rulers wield a strong influence over their subjects. The evils of Israel began with the evils of their first wicked king, Jeroboam. Open religious persecution is implied in 2 Chron. 11:13–16.

22. Sins of Jeroboam. Jeroboam opened the floodgates of iniquity. The inundation finally enveloped the nation in total ruin. If the people had had a strong experience of their own, they might have withstood the pernicious influence of their king (see on v. 8).

23. Removed Israel. The Lord used Assyria as His tool for the accomplishment of His purpose (see Isa. 10:5–12).

By all his servants. See Hosea 1:6; 9:16; Amos 3:11, 12; Amos 5:27; Isa. 28:1–4.

Carried away. A small remnant remained (see 2 Chron. 34:9). These intermarried with the heathen, adopted their ways, and so far forgot the customs of their fathers that the people of Judah refused to regard them as brethren. After some years they established a temple of their own on Mt. Gerizim, where they worshiped and carried on their ritual as a rival to that of the Temple at Jerusalem. The people who were carried away never returned. Some of their descendants joined the remnant of Judah who returned under the decree of Cyrus (Ezra 1:1–4). Others intermarried with the peoples where they lived, accepted their religion and their ways, and lost their identity. A few, no doubt, remained true to their religious convictions, letting their light shine in the lands to which they were carried, and influencing some there to accept the worship of the only true God.

24. From Babylon. The Assyrian policy of deportation applied not only to Israel but to all subject peoples. Babylon was at this time under Assyrian domination, but the nation was in a state of unrest. To prevent revolts, many Babylonians were transferred to the country of Israel. Sargon reports the suppression of an uprising in Babylon at the beginning of his reign and of transporting numbers of their people to the land of Hatti (Syria and Palestine). The “king of Assyria” here referred to is probably Sargon, who took the throne of Assyria in B.C. 722.

Cuthah. This city has been identified with *Tell Ibṛāhīm*, northeast of Babylon.

Ava. Identified by some with *Tell Kafr ‘Ayā* on the Orontes River, southwest of Homs; but other sites have been suggested, leaving the location uncertain.

Hamath. A city on the Orontes 118 mi. (189 km.) north of Damascus and 28 mi. (45 km.) north of the modern Homs. Sargon reports its conquest (see ch. 18:34; 19:13). The city of Hamath is now known as *Hama*.

Sepharvaim. Formerly identified with Sippar on the Euphrates, but now thought by some to be the Syrian city of Sibraim, “between the border of Damascus and the border of Hamath” (Eze. 47:16). However the site cannot be positively identified today.

25. Lions. These animals were common in Palestine in ancient times (Judges 14:5; 1 Sam. 17:34; 2 Sam. 23:20; Prov. 22:13; 26:13). They probably had grown rare during the period of the kingdoms, although at times they are mentioned (1 Kings 13:24; 20:36). During the disordered times after the fall of Samaria they doubtless increased in numbers and boldness. Lions were still present in Palestine and Syria in the Middle Ages.

26. The manner of the God. The gods of the Orient were for the most part local gods, each possessing his own peculiarities (see 1 Kings 20:23). The peoples transported to Israel thought that they must in some way have offended the local gods and that for this reason the lions had been sent upon them as a scourge.

27. One of the priests. The priest returned was probably from one of the shrines at Dan or Bethel.

28. Dwelt in Beth-el. This was where one of the national sanctuaries had been located, and it was likely one of the priests who had previously officiated there who now returned. He did teach the people concerning Jehovah; nevertheless idolatry continued.

29. The Samaritans. This is the only place in the OT where these people are given this name.

30. Succoth-benoth. Some believe that this may have been *Šarpanitu*, the consort of the Babylonian god Marduk. It probably was some title of Marduk himself.

Nergal. The famous Babylonian god of war and patron god of Cuthah.

Ashima. A goddess of Syria, well known in Syrian mythology. *Ašim* seems to have been one of the gods worshiped by the Elephantine Jews during the 5th century B.C.

31. Nibhaz. This is probably an idol worshiped by the Avites, but its identity is not positively known. By some it has been identified with an Elamite divinity, *Ibna-Haza*, by others with the Mandaic *Nebaz*, the lord of darkness.

Tartak. A Syrian god.

Burnt their children. Similar to the local worship of Molech.

Adrammelech. A god worshiped in northwestern Mesopotamia under the name of *Adad–milki*, “Hadad is king,” a form of the Syrian god Hadad.

Anammelech. Possibly, “Anu is king.” Anu was the famous sky god of early Mesopotamia.

32. Feared the Lord. Earlier (v. 25), “they feared not the Lord.” The influence of the priest of Bethel did not make these people true worshipers of the God of heaven. The thought is that the people, along with the worship of other gods, also gave a certain recognition to the national God of Israel.

Lowest of them. They made priests for themselves of all classes of the people, giving little heed to the qualifications that should characterize men devoted to the service of religion.

34. Fear not the Lord. This statement does not contradict the statement of v. 33. That verse states that the worship of Jehovah was combined with the worship of many other gods and goddesses. This verse emphasizes that this was in no sense a true recognition of the Lord. If it had been, there would have been an inquiry into His laws and an effort to conform to them. No man can serve both God and idols. There is only one true God, and those who in any way recognize other deities, do not truly fear the Lord despite pretending to do so.

After their statutes. The new mixed worship of Samaria could not and did not recognize the statutes given by the Lord to His people. The law of the Lord and the ordinances of the Mosaic law were largely ignored. The Israelites who had been left in the land amalgamated with the new settlers and united with them in their worship (see 2 Kings 23:19; 2 Chron. 34:3–7, 33; John 4:22).

35. A covenant. See Ex. 19:5, 6.

Not fear other gods. God’s ten-commandment law was the basis of the covenant He made with His people (Ex. 20:1–17; 34:27, 28). The first two commandments of the law prohibited the recognition of other gods and the worship of idols (Ex. 20:3–5).

36. Brought you up. Compare the preamble to the ten-commandment law given at Sinai (Ex. 20:2).

37. Wrote for you. Written so there might be no misunderstanding of the divine requirements (see Ex. 24:3, 4).

40. After their former manner. Almost immediately after God had made His covenant with Israel and the people had promised to be obedient (Ex. 24:3, 7), they showed their wayward tendency by worshiping the golden calf (Ex. 32:8).

41. Unto this day. It is evident from these words that the writer was not a contemporary of the events he has been describing, but that he lived some time after, perhaps after the destruction of the kingdom of Judah (see p. 716). The Elephantine papyri (see Vol. I, p. 108) bear witness to the fact that in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah “the Jews,” as the writers of these papyri term themselves, had a religion in which they worshiped a number of heathen deities besides Jehovah. These Jews had settled in Egypt, but maintained contact with both the high priest at Jerusalem and the sons of Sanballat, governor of Samaria.

Thus ends the history of Israel—a people who should have been a “peculiar treasure” to the Lord and “above all people” (Ex. 19:5). Never had a people started out with greater promise, never did a nation meet with greater ignominy and reproach. Israel discovered

by sad experience that “righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov. 14:34).

Little is known of the northern tribes subsequent to their being taken into captivity. Many probably merged with the peoples among whom they lived, and lost their identity. Others continued the worship of Jehovah and united with the Jews of the Babylonian captivity (see Jer. 50:4, 20, 33). Some returned with the exiles from Judah under Zerubbabel and Ezra (Ezra 8:35; 1 Chron. 9:3). In NT times Jews and their proselytes were found in Media, Parthia, Elam, Cappadocia, Phrygia, Egypt, Libya, Cyrene, Crete, Arabia, and throughout the East (Acts 2:9–11). How many of these were descendants of the Israelites taken captive by Assyria cannot be known.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1 PK 287

7, 11, 14–16PK 291

20, 23 PK 292

CHAPTER 18

1 *Hezekiah's good reign. 4 He destroyeth idolatry, and prospereth. 9 Samaria is carried captive for their sins. 13 Sennacherib invading Judah is pacified by a tribute. 17 Rabshakeh, sent by Sennacherib again, revileth Hezekiah, and by blasphemous persuasions soliciteth the people to revolt.*

1. Hezekiah. From now on the kings whose records will appear are kings of Judah. When Hezekiah came to the throne—probably as coregent with his father Ahaz (see pp. 86, 150)—Israel was almost at the close of its tragic history. Judah continued for nearly a century and a half longer. Walking in the ways of the nations round about, the people fell a prey to those nations. Ahaz, Hezekiah's predecessor, had gone far toward bringing Judah down to the same level as Israel. The worship of heathen gods was encouraged, the Temple of the Lord was devoted to the worship of idols, and tribute was paid to Assyria. Hezekiah made a sharp and quick reversal in the religious and political policies of his father. The Temple was cleansed, the worship of false gods rooted out, submission to Assyria after a time abandoned, and the nation brought closer to righteousness and God.

2. Twenty and nine years. On the chronology of Hezekiah see pp. 86, 150, 160.

3. That which was right. Three of the remaining chapters of the book of Kings are devoted to the reign of Hezekiah. Hezekiah did that which was right in the sight of God, even though it took courage to do this. He had to go contrary to the trend of the times, and faced opposition within his own country and without. But encouraged by the prophet Isaiah, he fearlessly stood for principle and introduced a religious reformation that did much to return the people of Judah to the ways of their fathers and to give them stability and strength among the nations.

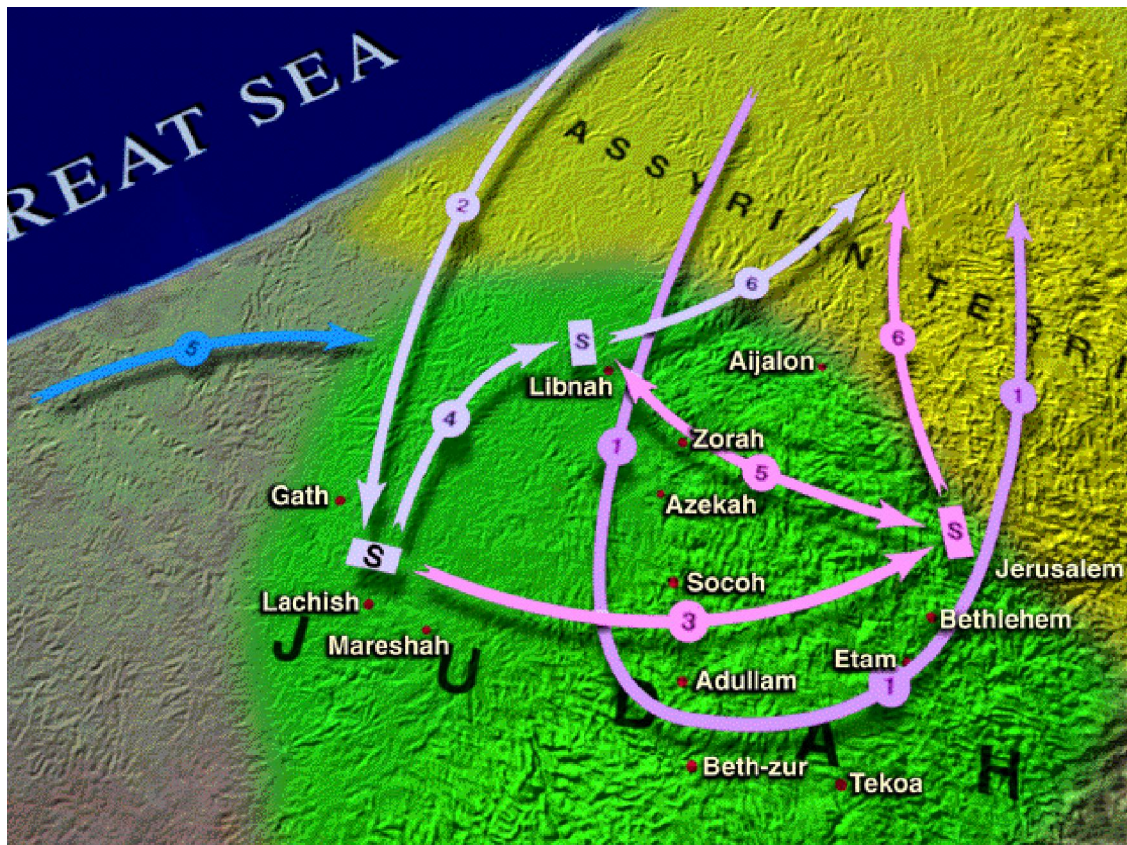
4. Removed the high places. Until this time the high places had not been fully removed since Judah had existed as a nation. Hezekiah had seen what disobedience had brought to Israel, and was determined that his nation should not suffer a similar fate. He loved God and determined to do all in his power to cleanse the country of every form of idolatry. The high places, though forbidden by the law, were used by many of the people as favorite centers of worship (1 Kings 3:2; 14:23; 22:43; 2 Kings 12:3; 14:4; 15:4, 35). Up to the time of Hezekiah they had been tolerated by the kings of Judah and no doubt by this time they were accepted as an established part of the national religion.

Brake the images. These measures were taken after the cleansing of the Temple and the holding of the Passover in the first year of Hezekiah's reign (2 Chron. 29:3, 17; 30:1, 15; 31:1).

Brasen serpent. See Num. 21:6–9. This is the first reference to this serpent after the time of Moses. Some think that it was kept in the tabernacle as long as that existed and was transferred to the Temple at the time of Solomon, but of this there is no proof. By this time, however, it was regarded as a sacred relic, and was thought to possess virtue in itself. By burning incense before it, the people were giving to this serpent of brass the veneration that should have been accorded to God alone.

Invasions of Sennacherib

7



He called. One of the editions of the LXX, also the Syriac and the Targums read, “they called.”

Nehushtan. Probably “bronze god,” from the same root as the Heb. *nechosheth*, “bronze.” Others derive Nehushtan from *nachaś*, “serpent.”

5. In the Lord. Not in military might as the nations round about.

⁷Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (2 Ki 17:8). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

None like him. This statement was probably made after the close of the history of Judah. It does not contradict what is said of Josiah in ch. 23:25, where his fidelity to the law of Moses is particularly commended. Hezekiah's outstanding characteristic was his trust in God.

6. Departed not. Many kings who had started well turned away from God during the course of their reigns; for example, Solomon (1 Kings 11:1–11), Joash (2 Chron. 24:17–25), and Amaziah (2 Chron. 25:14–16). Hezekiah, too, fell into error (ch. 20:12–19), but he never forsook the Lord, and did all he could to make amends.

7. Prospered. This material prosperity is set forth in 2 Chron. 32:23, 27–30.

Rebelled. Ahaz had accepted the suzerainty of Assyria and paid tribute, which Hezekiah now refused to pay.

8. Smote the Philistines. This constituted revolt against Assyria, for Sargon had smitten Philistia as far as the borders of Egypt and had captured Hanunu king of Gaza. Thus the country was under Assyrian control. Sargon claimed that in his 11th year he deposed Azuru of Ashdod, and he mentions receipt of tribute from Philistia, Judah, Edom, and Moab.

9. Shalmaneser. The fifth Assyrian ruler by this name. He reigned from 727 to 722 B.C.

Against Samaria. Verses 9 to 12 constitute a repetition of the account of the fall of Samaria already given in ch. 17:50–23. Samaria's fall is here dated in the years of both Hezekiah and Hoshea, and the story repeated to connect it with Hezekiah.

10. Three years. This is a good demonstration of the common ancient habit of counting inclusively. From the fourth to the sixth years of Hezekiah we today reckon an interval of two years, but the ancients counted years four, five, and six, three years (see p. 136).

They took it. The plural "they" is of interest. It might refer to the Assyrians in general, but that is hardly likely, for the previous verse speaks of Shalmaneser as coming against Samaria and besieging it. It has been suggested that the "they" here probably refers to Shalmaneser and someone associated with him. This may have been Shalmaneser's general and successor on the throne, Sargon (see on ch. 17:6).

11. In Halah. This statement is again a repetition, taken from ch. 17:6 in the earlier account of the fall of Samaria.

12. Obeyed not. A brief summarization of the more extensive account of Israel's disobedience found in ch. 17:7–23.

13. The fourteenth year. This is the first of Sennacherib's famous campaigns against Hezekiah. The narrative runs from chs. 18:13 to 19:37. The same account, in practically identical language, is found in the 36th and 37th chs. of Isaiah. This would suggest that Isaiah was the author of this portion of 2 Kings. A somewhat abbreviated history in 2 Chron. 32:1–22 gives details of Hezekiah's war preparations.

Scholars disagree as to whether the narrative describes one or two campaigns. The majority of modern commentators have held that the account describes one campaign and that the events all belong in Hezekiah's 14th year, 701 B.C. Others have held that the account blends the records of two Assyrian campaigns, the first in the 14th year of Hezekiah's reign, in which the fenced cities of Judah were taken, and the second late in Hezekiah's reign when a large section of the Assyrian army was destroyed (ch. 19:35). In favor of the former view is the fact that there seems to be no natural break in the Bible

narrative. Furthermore Assyrian sources describe a campaign of Sennacherib generally dated in the year 701 B.C., but make no positive mention of a later campaign, against Judah, although the records may be incomplete, or it may be Sennacherib purposely omitted from his annals a record of his defeat. Concerning the campaign of 701 B.C., Sennacherib claims that he shut up “Hezekiah like a caged bird,” a description that equally fits a campaign over-running the fenced cities of Judah as well as one more definitely threatening Jerusalem.

Hezekiah’s extensive preparations for defense (see 2 Chron. 32:2–6) suggest some considerable interval between the two campaigns; also the fact that the Bible narrative seems to indicate that the death of Sennacherib took place shortly after his return from his unsuccessful attempt against Jerusalem. If there was only the one campaign in 701 B.C. his assassination would come some 20 years after his return to Assyria. Furthermore, inscriptions in which Tirhakah (ch. 19:9) gives his age as 20 years at the time when he became coregent with his brother in 690 B.C., indicate that he was born about the year 709 B.C. This would make it impossible for him to have taken part in the events described if they occurred in the year 701 B.C. It was formerly held that though he did not become king of Egypt till about 690 B.C., he might have been a general of the army. If Tirhakah’s statements concerning his age are correct the only way to synchronize the statement of ch. 19:9 with its context is to assume a second campaign toward the close of Hezekiah’s reign (see PK 339). Evidently the fenced cities were taken and tribute paid in the first campaign, and Jerusalem saved by divine interposition in the second.

It is inconsequential that opinions differ as to where the division comes in the narrative, which was written to show God’s overruling care for those who seek Him, not to furnish a chronological outline.

The fenced cities. Sennacherib claims the capture of 46 walled cities of Judah.

14. *Lachish.* In the record of his third campaign “against the Hittite-land,” Sennacherib mentions coming first against Sidon and then against the cities of Philistia. Then he turned inland to Lachish. Lachish is 19 1/4 mi. (30.8 km.) southeast of Ashkelon and 27 mi. (43.2 km.) southwest of Jerusalem. This siege of Lachish is depicted on an Assyrian relief (see plate facing p. 64).

I have offended. At this stage **Hezekiah**, struck with terror, capitulated but did not surrender Jerusalem. He sought to buy off Sennacherib by paying a costly ransom.

Three hundred talents. Sennacherib claims the receipt of “thirty talents of gold and eight hundred talents of silver,” together with a great treasure of gems, couches of ivory, valuable woods, and “all kinds of valuable treasures.”

15. *In the house of the Lord.* By Hezekiah’s capitulation to Sennacherib, the Temple unfortunately had to suffer.

16. *Cut off the gold.* Only a short time before, Ahaz had robbed the Temple of its treasures when he purchased the protection of Tiglath-pileser (ch. 16:8). Hezekiah was therefore compelled to resort to extreme measures in order to make up the sum demanded by Sennacherib.

17. *Tartan.* This is the title of the chief general of the Assyrian armies. Sargon sent his tartan with the Assyrian armies to fight against Ashdod (see Isa. 20:1). In Assyrian the word here given as “Tartan” is *turtânu* or *tartânu*.

Rabsaris. This was the title of a high officer of the Assyrian court, probably the “chief eunuch.” Nebuchadnezzar’s rabsaris was present at Jerusalem when the city fell to the Babylonians (Jer. 39:3, 13). The title has been found in an old Aramaic inscription.

Rab-shakeh. The Rabshakeh was another important Assyrian official, the chief cupbearer. In this instance he was the spokesman for the Assyrian envoys (see vs. 19, 26–28). Only he is mentioned as having returned to Sennacherib (ch. 19:8). In Assyrian texts this official title appears as *rab-shâqû*.

Upper pool. There is some uncertainty as to the site of this pool. Some think that it was at the south of the city, near the Kidron Valley, and others think that it was at the north. Some years before, Isaiah and his son Shear-jashub met with Ahaz at this pool (Isa. 7:3), which apparently existed before the days of Hezekiah and the aqueduct he constructed (see p. 87).

18. Eliakim. Eliakim had been elevated to this important position after the demotion of Shebna, in fulfillment of Isaiah’s prediction (Isa. 22:20–24). Some, however, think the Shebna of Isa. 22 was not the person so named here.

Shebna. See Isa. 22:15–19.

Joah. There is no other record of this man. The scribe, or “recorder,” was one of the high officers of the realm, who issued the king’s edicts, took care of his correspondence, and probably had charge of the royal purse (see ch. 12:10).

19. Rab-shakeh said. Why the Rab-shakeh did the speaking is not revealed. Perhaps he was the personal representative of the king. As the chief cupbearer, he may have been a sort of master of ceremonies at the court of Assyria, one who could speak fluently in other languages besides Assyrian.

The great king. This is a favorite title of Assyrian kings. Sennacherib styles himself: “Sennacherib, the great king, the mighty king, king of the universe, king of Assyria.”

What confidence? Hezekiah had placed his chief confidence and trust in God (2 Chron. 32:7, 8), and it was this confidence in the Lord to which the Assyrian envoys now referred (2 Chron. 32:10, 11).

20. Strength for the war. Hezekiah had made extensive preparations against Assyrian attack, building up an army, strengthening the walls of Jerusalem, preparing weapons of defense and offense, and doing all that was in his power to be ready when the Assyrians would strike (2 Chron. 32:2–6).

21. Bruised reed. An apt description of Egypt. The bulrush growing by the Nile fitly symbolized the land in which it grew. Apparently strong and secure, it was quite unworthy of trust. If a man endeavored to lean upon it, it would give way, wounding the hand that grasped it. Hoshea turned to Egypt for help and lost his kingdom as a result (ch. 17:4–6). The present crisis in Judah came during the Twenty-fifth Dynasty in Egypt, when Egypt was torn by internal dissension and destined to fall a prey to Assyria. However, under a line of Ethiopian kings, Egypt was still endeavoring to hold her own against Assyrian might.

22. In the Lord. See 2 Chron. 32:11.

Hath taken away. Sennacherib had no doubt heard of Hezekiah’s reforms, how the high places had been summarily removed, and the local shrines destroyed (ch. 18:4). Many of the people sacrificed to Jehovah at these unauthorized places of worship, and probably resented Hezekiah’s interference with their practices. The Rab-shakeh was now endeavoring to appeal to the people against their king, and he may have thought that

Hezekiah had actually shown disregard for God in his efforts to destroy the popular local shrines.

23. *Two thousand horses.* The Assyrian envoy was endeavoring to ridicule Judah's lack of military strength. The Assyrians had come up with a large force of cavalry, and 2,000 horses would mean nothing to them. They would be given to Judah if Judah on its part could provide that number of trained horsemen.

24. *One captain.* Again the Assyrian was simply belittling Judah for its military weakness. He taunted the people with not possessing the strength to repulse a single captain of the Assyrian host, one of the weakest of the many companies the Assyrians had in the field.

On Egypt. The Rabshakeh sneered at the weakness of Judah and the folly of putting trust in so weak a power as Egypt.

25. *The Lord said to me.* This is a remarkable statement to come from an Assyrian. Had he heard of the messages of Isaiah in which he prophesied that the Lord would use Assyria to bring judgments upon Israel and Judah (see Isa. 7:17–24; 10:5–12)? Whatever the case, he sought to create the impression that resistance against Assyria was useless, that he had been given a divine commission to bring about the destruction of Judah and that the doom of the southern kingdom was inevitable.

26. *Syrian language.* This statement shows that the Syrian, or Aramaic, language was already in use, at least to some extent, both in Assyria and among the Hebrews. Contemporary materials show that Aramaic was now beginning to be the language of diplomacy and commerce throughout Western Asia. Among the Hebrews, however, it was not yet common, for the ordinary people were not able to understand it. After the Babylonian Exile, the Aramaic language gradually took the place of the Hebrew among the Jews.

The Jews' language. Outside of this narrative with its parallels in 2 Chron. 32, and Isa. 36, the expression occurs only in Neh. 13:24. The word "Jew" appears first in 2 Kings 16:6, but in the later Biblical books the name becomes common. According to contemporary Assyrian usage the people of the southern kingdom of Judah were already known as *Yehudim*, or Jews, and their language as Jewish.

On the wall. The parley was held within hearing of the soldiers and perhaps others upon the wall, and the words of the Assyrian envoys would thus be carried throughout the city.

27. *To the men which sit.* The words were intended for the people of Jerusalem, not merely for the king. The Rabshakeh was trying to strike terror into the hearts of the people and to bring such pressure of popular sentiment against Hezekiah, to force him to give up his policy of resistance.

That they may eat. By these words the Rabshakeh threatened the Jews with the dire consequences of resistance. If the siege continued, the people would be reduced to such straits that they would be forced to appease their hunger and thirst with the vilest and most unnatural food (see 2 Kings 6:26–29; cf. 2 Chron. 32:11).

28. *Jews' language.* By requesting the Rabshakeh not to speak in a language the people would understand, the Hebrew envoys had revealed one of their weaknesses, and the Assyrian made the most of it. His words were now to the people and not to the king.

29. *Deceive you.* The Rabshakeh was now setting himself up as a friend of the people of Judah, endeavoring to convey the impression that Hezekiah had his own interests at

heart, not those of the people, and that by his policy of deception he would bring a terrible doom upon them.

His hand. A number of the Hebrew manuscripts and many of the versions read “my hand.” The corresponding passage in Isa. 36:14 omits this phrase.

30. Neither let Hezekiah. It appears that the Assyrians were acquainted with Hezekiah’s firm trust in the Lord and with his endeavors to cause the people to place their confidence in God. From the first Hezekiah had encouraged his people to be strong (see 2 Chron. 32:7, 8).

31. Hearken not. This was really an invitation to the people of Judah to repudiate their king and to take affairs into their own hands.

Make an agreement. The invitation was for the people of Judah to make their peace with Sennacherib and accept him as their king and friend.

His own vine. The expression conveys the idea of peace and prosperity, such as the people enjoyed under Solomon (1 Kings 4:24, 25), and such as would again be theirs if they accepted the covenant conditions (see Micah 4:3, 4; Zech. 3:10).

32. Like your own. Assyria’s cruel policy of deportation was here being set before the people of Judah in as favorable a light as possible. They would be carried away, but to a land where life would be as happy and as prosperous as in their homeland. To a certain extent this statement was true, for many of the exiles who were taken to foreign lands found themselves so contented in their new environment that they were unwilling to return when the opportunity was offered them.

33. Any of the gods. The Assyrians had good reason to make such a boast. They had gone everywhere with seemingly uninterrupted success. No gods seemed able to deliver their lands from Assyrian might. Ashur seemed to be the most powerful god of all. Not even the God of the Hebrews appeared to be a match for Ashur, for Samaria had met its doom and Judah for years had been under Assyrian power. Little did the Assyrians understand that it was disobedience to Jehovah that had brought Israel low, and that the Assyrian successes had been allowed by the very God against whom they now boasted.

34. Of Hamath. The cities here listed are all places that had recently fallen before Assyrian might. Hamath was on the Orontes, 118 mi. (189 km.) north of Damascus. Sargon frequently mentions the city as having been subdued by him and tells of the deportation of its people. Colonists from Hamath were placed in Samaria (2 Kings 17:24), and Hebrew exiles seem to have been placed in Hamath (Isa. 11:11).

Arpad. An important city in northern Syria, northwest of Aleppo. In 754, 742, 741, and 740 the Assyrian campaign of the year was against Arpad. In 743 the city seems to have been the headquarters of Tiglath-pileser, for in that year the Assyrian armies were “in Arpad.” In 720 Arpad was again smitten by Sargon. Arpad is now known as *Tell Erfâd*.

Sepharvaim. One of the cities whose inhabitants were placed by Sargon in Samaria (see on ch. 17:24).

Hena. The location of this town is not positively known. Some have identified it with *Ānah* on the Euphrates, but others believe it to be in northern Syria, as are the other cities here mentioned in this same passage.

Ivah. Probably the same as Ava, from which settlers were brought to Samaria (see on ch. 17:24).

Have they delivered Samaria? This seems to have been the crowning argument, for the people of Samaria had also been Hebrews, and claimed to an extent, at least, to worship the same God.

35. Among all the gods. The places previously named were among the northern neighbors of Judah. But Assyrian conquests had extended throughout the countries of Western Asia. Sennacherib claimed that his own power and the power of his god were greater than that of all the gods of all the world, not excluding the God of Judah.

36. Held their peace. There are times when silence is golden. Nothing that any of the people of Judah might have said at this time would have made any impression upon the Assyrian envoys. God Himself would have to provide the answer that was needed.

The king's commandment. The Rabshakeh had hoped to hear some word of sedition to be followed by a popular outbreak, but instead the people of Judah gave ear to their king.

37. With their clothes rent. The Hebrews rent their clothes at times of mourning (Job 1:20), and also of great shock or distress (Gen. 37:29; 1 Sam. 4:12; 2 Sam. 13:19; 15:32; 2 Chron. 34:27; Ezra 9:3; Jer. 36:24).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–5PK 288, 331

1–7PK 339

6, 7 PK 677; 3T 573

9–11PK 291, 305, 351

12 PK 292

13–16PK 305, 339

17–37PK 349–354

19, 20 PK 352

CHAPTER 19

1 *Hezekiah mourning sendeth to Isaiah to pray for them.* 6 *Isaiah comforteth them.* 8 *Sennacherib, going to encounter Tirhakah, sendeth a blasphemous letter to Hezekiah.* 14 *Hezekiah's prayer.* 20 *Isaiah's prophecy of the pride and destruction of Sennacherib, and the good of Zion.* 35 *An angel slayeth the Assyrians.* 36 *Sennacherib is slain at Nineveh by his own sons.*

1. Rent his clothes. Hezekiah thus expressed his distress at the prospects of a terrible siege facing Jerusalem. At any moment Jerusalem might be expected to bear the full brunt of Assyrian attack. The words of Sennacherib's envoys were not idle threats. Reliefs from the palaces of Nineveh and Khorsabad reveal the terrible cruelties of Assyria against places taken by siege. Unspeakable horrors were ahead if the siege of Jerusalem should begin in earnest. In his deep distress the king clothed himself in sackcloth and made his way to the Temple to place the matter before the Lord.

2. The priests. Hezekiah sent his emissaries, clothed in garments of mourning, to Isaiah so that the prophet might also unite with him in earnest intercession before God. According to 2 Chron. 32:20 both king and prophet prayed earnestly before God. This is the first reference in Kings to the prophet Isaiah, whose vision of God, that encouraged him for the tasks ahead, came in the year that King Uzziah died (Isa. 6:1). The work of this mighty prophet was carried on through the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (Isa. 1:1). Thus Isaiah had had a long period of ministry before being introduced in the record of Kings. The historical accounts preserved in Kings are usually

brief, and many items are omitted. Such books as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel reveal many details of great interest and importance not found in the book of Kings.

3. Day of trouble. For many years Isaiah had been predicting such a time as this. It was one of the greatest crises that Judah had ever faced, and, without divine intervention, the situation might well bring the nation to its final ruin.

Strength to bring forth. A striking figure emphasizing the terrible extremity. Most of Judah had already fallen before Assyrian might, and now the invaders threatened the capital.

4. God will hear. The Assyrian envoy had reproached and belittled the great God of heaven, placing Him on a par with the gods of the nations round about. God's honor was at stake, and for His own name's sake He might be expected to intervene in behalf of Judah.

Living God. For other instances of this title see, for example, Deut. 5:26; Joshua 3:10; 1 Sam. 17:26; Ps. 42:2; 84:2; Jer. 10:10; 23:36; Dan. 6:26; Hosea 1:10. The expression designates Jehovah as the One in whom is life original, unborrowed, and undervived.

The remnant. Israel was gone, most of Judah was gone. The last remnant in Jerusalem stood in danger of being quickly wiped out.

6. Be not afraid. Only a short time before, Hezekiah admonished his people with these same words (2 Chron. 32:7). Now this same admonition came to him from God. The human tendency is to fear in an hour of crisis, but the Lord in His mercy sends messages of encouragement (see Num. 14:9; Joshua 1:6, 7, 9, 18; Isa. 43:1, 5; Luke 12:32).

7. Send a blast. Literally, "I will put a spirit in him." The meaning of this passage is not clear. Perhaps what is meant is that God would place upon Sennacherib a spirit of trembling and fear, an impulse that would turn him from his thoughts of conquest and send him home in utter terror and dismay. The forecast is perhaps purposely vague, the Lord may not have desired at this time to reveal details.

Fall by the sword. See on v. 37.

8. Libnah. Probably to be identified with *Tell eš-Šâfi*. For its location, see on ch. 8:22.

9. Tirhakah king of Ethiopia. Tirhakah, sometimes spelled Taharka, became king of Egypt about 690 B.C. He was an Ethiopian (Nubian) who occupied the throne with his brother Shabataka, who ruled Egypt from about 700 to 684. After the death of Shabataka, Tirhakah reigned alone till 664. He belonged to the Twenty-fifth Dynasty, when Egypt was ruled by a line of Ethiopian kings. On the synchronism of Tirhakah with the campaign against Jerusalem see on ch. 18:13.

Sent messengers. Sennacherib hoped to bring about the capitulation of Hezekiah before the Egyptians would strike.

10. Deceive thee. The previous message was to the people, not to let Hezekiah deceive them (ch. 18:29). But the people had made no reply. Now the message was to the king whose confidence in God, Sennacherib was endeavoring to undermine.

11. To all lands. Assyria was at the height of its military career. Tiglath-pileser had conquered Babylon and made himself king of that land, Shalmaneser had destroyed the nation of Israel, Sargon had devastated countries in every direction, and now Sennacherib was following in Sargon's footsteps.

Destroying them utterly. Sennacherib was endeavoring to strike terror to the heart of Hezekiah by setting before him the terrible punishment meted out to those who dared withstand the Assyrian arms. By surrendering now he could at least hope for some measure of clemency from Sennacherib.

12. My fathers. For a long period past, Sennacherib's forefathers have been universally successful in war, with the gods of the nations being powerless to resist them. The places mentioned in this verse are all in the neighborhood of ancient Haran, the home of Abraham in northern Mesopotamia, which had long since fallen under Assyrian dominion.

Gozan. This was a city on the northern Khabur, 90 mi. (144 km.) east of Haran. Exiles from Samaria were placed in Gozan (ch. 17:6). In 808 the campaign of the year was against this city (Guzana). The site of Gozan is now known as *Tell Halaf*.

Haran. The ancient home of Abraham, after he left Ur (see on Gen. 11:31). It is mentioned as having come under Assyrian domination as early as the reign of Adadnirari I, 1305–1273.

Rezep. The Assyrian *Raşappa*. Probably the modern *Ruşâfe*, northeast of Palmyra. It is mentioned in the inscriptions of Adadnirari III, 810–782.

Eden. This area is mentioned with Haran in Eze. 27:23, and the “house of Eden” is referred to in Amos 1:5. Some have identified Eden with the land lying on both sides of the Euphrates, southwest of Haran and southeast of Carchemish. It is frequently referred to in the Assyrian inscriptions under the name of *Bit-Adini*.

Thelasar. Probably *Til-ashurri*, or “hill of Assur,” in northern Syria, in the bend of the Euphrates, honored by the name of the Assyrian god.

13. Of Hamath. For the identification of the sites referred to in this verse see on ch. 18:34. In that reference the helplessness of the gods of these cities is emphasized. Now in addressing Hezekiah, the emphasis is upon the fact that the kings of these cities are no more.

14. Received the letter. The Assyrian envoys probably presented their message both orally and in writing—orally to Hezekiah's envoys, since Hezekiah would himself probably not come out to see them, and in writing, so that the letter itself might be delivered to the king.

Spread it. As if the message was addressed as much to the God of Israel as to the king.

15. Between the cherubims. This refers to the holy Shekinah, the miraculous glory that symbolized the personal presence of God and that appeared above the mercy seat between the two cherubim (see Ex. 25:22; 29:43; Lev. 16:2; 1 Sam. 4:4).

Thou alone. Hezekiah in his prayer acknowledged God as the only God, the Lord of all heaven and earth, whom Sennacherib had boldly defied. This was a protest against the letter of Sennacherib, in which he treated Jehovah as only one among the many insignificant gods of Western Asia, who had proved so helpless before the Assyrians.

16. See: and hear. Hezekiah was jealous of the honor of his God and felt that the Lord in justice to Himself could not but take vengeance upon this arrogant heathen king.

18. No gods. The fact that both the nations and their gods had been destroyed by Assyrian might was not strange, for these gods were not gods at all but only images made

by the hands of men. The contrast between Jehovah and false gods forms a prominent part of the teaching of the second half of the book of Isaiah (see Isa. 41:24; 44:8–10).

19. *Thou art the Lord God.* Literally, “Thou Jehovah alone art God.” The present emergency offered a remarkable opportunity for God to manifest His presence and power before the nations of earth. The fame of Assyria’s might had gone out through all the earth. By God’s saving Jerusalem from Sennacherib, Assyria would be humbled and the nations would know that Jehovah was supreme.

20. *I have heard.* Hezekiah was not left in doubt concerning the answer to his prayer. The prophet Isaiah immediately conveyed to him the message that God had heard his petition and that judgment would be sent upon the Assyrians.

21. *The virgin.* Jerusalem withstood every effort of the Assyrians against her, and did not allow herself to become defiled. This personification of Jerusalem as a woman is a common figure (see Isa. 23:12; 52:2; Lam. 2:13; Micah 4:10).

Shaken her head. A gesture of scorn among the Hebrews (see Ps. 22:7; 109:25; Matt. 27:39).

22. *The Holy One of Israel.* This is a favorite phrase with Isaiah. He uses it 27 times in his book. It appears only five times in the rest of the Bible (Ps. 71:22; 78:41; 89:18; Jer. 50:29; 51:5).

23. *Hast said.* Isaiah here expresses the thoughts that were in Sennacherib’s heart. The Assyrian king was extremely self-confident that with his numerous chariots he would be able to conquer any region he chose and that his armies could trample down all opposition and overcome all obstacles that might stand in the way.

The tall cedar trees. This phrase may be applied both literally and figuratively. The Assyrians planned to cut down the beautiful cedars of Lebanon for their own use. Figuratively, the phrase means the complete devastation of the entire country, with the ruin of the nation’s stately palaces and proud inhabitants (see Isa. 2:12–17; 10:33, 34).

24. *Digged and drunk.* The meaning seems to be that Sennacherib feels himself able to cope with any difficulty. Mountains do not stop him, he climbs over them. Deserts do not stop him, he crosses them, digging his own wells for water. Rivers do not delay him, they dry up underneath his feet.

Rivers of besieged places. Perhaps a reference to Egypt. Egypt was beyond the desert and was cut up by many canals. Sennacherib was making the boast that these would prove no obstacle to him, they would simply vanish before him.

25. *I have done it.* The Lord is now giving His answer to the Assyrian king. After all Sennacherib’s boasting as to what he would do, the Lord asks him if he has not heard that Jehovah has the destiny of nations under His control, and that every nation occupies its place only as permitted to do so by Him (see PK 535, 536). At that time the Assyrians were His tool for the carrying out of His purposes (see Isa. 10:5–15).

26. *Of small power.* The success of the Assyrian arms was by divine permission. Assyria might have become a powerful influence for good in the world if the nation had followed the reform that resulted from the preaching of Jonah (Jonah 3:5–10). When the Ninevites turned from their temporary repentance to their former idolatry and on to the conquest of the world, they made certain the doom of Assyria as a nation.

28. *Hook in thy nose.* Mesopotamian sculptures reveal that the Assyrians at times used the utmost barbarity in the treatment of their prisoners. A relief of Esarhaddon depicts Taharka of Egypt and Baalu of Tyre with rings in their noses and with cords

leading to the hand of the conqueror. Manasseh may have been taken to Assyria in some such way as this (see 2 Chron. 33:11).

29. A sign. The Lord gave many signs through the prophet Isaiah (2 Kings 20:9–11; Isa. 7:11, 14; 8:18; 20:2, 3). During the remainder of the current year the people would be able to find enough to eat from the aftergrowth in the field; he next year (probably sabbatical), they would also be able to obtain sufficient food from the regrowth; and in the following year they would resume the usual sowing and reaping. Normal agricultural activities had been interrupted by the presence of the Assyrian armies in the land.

30. The remnant. This expression indicates the extent of the devastation wrought as a result of the Assyrian invasion of Judah.

31. Shall go forth. Much of Judah had been thoroughly devastated by the Assyrian armies. Probably large numbers had flocked to Jerusalem to escape Sennacherib's onslaught. Now from this city a remnant would go forth to repopulate and restore the land. Isaiah, Micah, and Jeremiah frequently use the term "remnant" (see Isa. 10:20; 11:11; 14:22; 46:3; Jer. 23:3; 31:7; 40:11, 15; 42:2; 43:5; 44:14; Micah 2:12; 4:7; 5:7, 8).

32. With shield. Assyrian shields are conspicuous in ancient sculpture. Soldiers engaged in siege warfare were protected by enormous shields and thus were able to approach close to the walls of a city under attack (see plate facing p. 64).

Cast a bank. Frequent representations of such banks or ramps are shown in Assyrian reliefs. They were thrown up against the walls to enable battering-rams to approach the upper and weaker portions of the defenses.

34. Defend this city. See Isa. 31:5; 37:35; 38:6.

Mine own sake. God's honor was at stake, since Sennacherib had openly defied God.

35. That night. That is, the night following the day in which Isaiah's prophecy was delivered.

Smote. "All the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria" (2 Chron. 32:21). Perhaps most of the army that had been sent to take Jerusalem was slain.

When they arose. The apparent incongruity of the latter part of this verse disappears when it is observed that the subject of the sentence is indefinite and general, as if the sentence read, "when people rose up." That is, when those who were left of the army rose up the next morning all of their comrades (the 185,000 that the angel had slain) had become corpses.

36. Departed. Sennacherib was with the army guarding the approaches from Egypt when the judgment occurred (see PK 361). In terror and shame he quickly made his departure, returning to Assyria and leaving Hezekiah in peace to restore his land.

37. His sons smote him. Assyrian and Babylonian records confirm the assassination of Sennacherib at the hands of his sons.

Land of Armenia. Assyrian texts support the detail that the murderers of Sennacherib and a large rebellious faction fled to "Ararat," in the regions of Armenia to the north.

Reigned in his stead. According to Assyrian records Esarhaddon came to the throne in 681, and reigned till 669.

It was during the reign of Esarhaddon that Assyria attained its greatest extent and power. After one unsuccessful campaign, he conquered Egypt. In spite of the fact that no human being had ever held the power that was now his, signs of impending danger troubled him. Seeking to divide his potential enemies, he concluded a treaty with the

Scythians against the Cimmerians, but eventually died on his way south to put down a revolt in Egypt.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–37PK 354–366

1, 3–7PK 354

10–19PK 355

20–22PK 359

23–30PK 360

31–35PK 361

35 GC 512

37 PK 361

CHAPTER 20

1 *Hezekiah, having received a message of death, by prayer hath his life lengthened.* 8 *The sun goeth ten degrees backward for a sign of that promise.* 12 *Berodach-baladan sending to visit Hezekiah, because of the wonder, hath notice of his treasures.* 14 *Isaiah understanding thereof foretelleth the Babylonian captivity.* 20 *Manasseh succeedeth Hezekiah.*

1. In those days. This was about the time of Sennacherib's first invasion in Hezekiah's 14th year. In connection with the promise of Hezekiah's healing, the Lord said that He would deliver Jerusalem out of the hand of the king of Assyria and that He would add 15 years to Hezekiah's reign (ch. 20:6). This fits in with the details of Sennacherib's first campaign against Judah in Hezekiah's 14th year (see on ch. 18:13), and the fact that Hezekiah reigned 29 years (ch. 18:2). Parallel accounts of Hezekiah's illness and recovery are found in Isa. 38, 39 and in 2 Chron. 32:24–31.

Set thine house in order. This injunction reveals the reason why the message was given to Hezekiah. There were certain things to be set in order by way of turning over the rulership of the realm, perhaps certain preparations of soul to be made.

For thou shalt die. The normal course of the disease would bring certain death. The prophecy was a forecast of the results that would follow the circumstances as they existed at that time. With an alteration in circumstances the prediction was changed (see v. 5). Some prophetic predictions are not necessarily absolute but may be conditional, as was the case with Jonah's message to Nineveh (Jonah 3:4–10).

2. Prayed. Hezekiah did not conclude that it was useless to pray, as though the prophetic message had made death inevitable. If we pray, God may be able to do for us that which He could not do if we did not pray. Requests for healing, however, must be made in the spirit of submission. God alone knows whether the answering of a petition will work for the good of those concerned and redound to His glory. In praying for the sick some have made the mistake of almost demanding that the life of the sufferer be given to them. In many instances the lives of those who were thus spared did not bring glory to God. It would have been better for these souls to have passed to their rest while the hope of salvation was theirs (see 2T 148, 149). The extension of Hezekiah's life led to the one great mistake in the king's life (vs. 12–19). If he had added to his prayer "nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39), he might have died with his life's record unblemished.

3. With a perfect heart. Hezekiah's statement must be judged in the light of the times. In our present age of spiritual enlightenment it is generally not thought proper for man to

present his own goodness as the basis of God's favor. Man's endeavors come so woefully short of meeting the divine standard that the suppliant is urged to place his trust in merits wholly outside himself. Nevertheless it is proper, having done all in our power to comply with the conditions, to present the promises of God as the basis of our confidence.

4. Into the middle court. Hezekiah's answer came speedily. Before Isaiah had left the precincts of the palace he was bidden to return. God always hears the man who pours out his soul in earnest prayer. The answer may not be as expected, or as immediate or direct as was the case with Hezekiah, but the Lord hears nevertheless, and works all things for good for those who love Him (Rom. 8:28).

5. Captain. Literally, "leader," "prince," a designation of honor for one set apart to rule over God's people (see 1 Sam. 9:16; 10:1; 13:14; 2 Sam. 5:2; 1 Kings 1:35).

I will heal thee. God could have healed Hezekiah instantaneously, but He did not choose to do so.

The third day. That is, on the day after the morrow Hezekiah would be well enough to make his way to the Temple to give praise to God. It is implied that Hezekiah's first act upon recovering would be to return thanks to God in His Temple.

6. Fifteen years. See on v. 1.

7. Take a lump of figs. The king might have remonstrated at directions so simple as these. He was suffering from a fatal illness. Probably the infection from his "boil" had spread and was threatening shortly to take his life. In Hezekiah's case the illness had reached a state, however, where no ordinary remedy would avail. The king might have felt that the Lord should do something extraordinary to save his life. But when the directions were given for the employment of a simple remedial agency, they were followed, and the king was healed. Man may not understand the reasons for the ways of the Lord, but it is always the part of wisdom to give ear to His commands.

There is a further lesson here. The presentation of a case for divine healing does not exclude the use of natural remedies. The employment of such means does not reveal a lack of faith. It is our duty, after a petition for healing has been presented, to do all in our power to bring about relief from suffering and the arrest of the disease (see CH 381, 382) through natural means.

8. The sign. See on ch. 19:29. Hezekiah desired an immediate token that the Lord would do what He had said He would (see on Joshua 7:14; Judges 6:36).

10. Return backward. In the ordinary course of events the shadow on a sundial would gradually advance with the forward motion of the sun, but for it suddenly to retrogress would be a most remarkable occurrence, and for this reason Hezekiah chose this sign.

11. Ten degrees backward. There is no benefit to be derived from speculating as to how God performs His miracles. The sign came as a direct interposition by God.

The dial of Ahaz. Sundials of various types were employed in ancient Babylonia, Assyria, Egypt, and Rome. Ahaz may have secured one from Assyria through his contacts with Tiglath-pileser.

In Isaiah's parallel record there follows Hezekiah's prayer and thanksgiving song for his recovery (see Isa. 38:9-20).

12. Berodach-baladan. This should be written Merodach-baladan as in Isa. 39:1. This king has been identified with the pugnacious Marduk-apal-iddina, who was king of Babylon from 721 to 709, according to Ptolemy's Canon. He held Babylon again for a short period in 703. He was a sore thorn in the flesh of the Assyrians, presenting a

constant challenge to their control of Babylonia. At the time of Senacherib's campaign in Hezekiah's 14th year and the latter's illness, Merodach-baladan was, according to the chronology of the kings employed in this commentary, a king in exile, seeking for allies who were also opposed to Assyria and who might be of assistance to him against Assyria. Even though deposed, he could properly be called "king of Babylon" by those who still regarded him as the rightful but dispossessed ruler. Hezekiah evidently so recognized him.

Son of Baladan. Assyrian inscriptions call him the son of Yakin, a king of the 9th century, each of whose descendants referred to himself as "son of Yakin." Son probably stands for descendant as in the Assyrian inscriptions, which call Jehu the "son of Omri." In Merodach-baladan's ancestry there was probably a Baladan as well as a Yakin.

Sent letters. Babylonian astronomers noticed that this wonderful sundial miracle had occurred (see 2 Chron. 32:31). When Merodach-baladan heard why it had happened, he sent envoys to Jerusalem to congratulate Hezekiah and to learn more about the God who could perform such miracles (see PK 344). These ambassadors also may have taken the occasion to congratulate Hezekiah on his courageous resistance against Assyria. Merodach-baladan may have been seeking, at the same time, a formal alliance with Hezekiah against the common enemy.

13. All the house. Hezekiah undoubtedly felt flattered at this attention given to him by the "king of Babylon." In showing his treasures to the envoys from Babylonia and revealing his resources he was simply offering a bait to the cupidity of these rapacious foreigners, who would return to seize these treasures and take them to Babylon less than a century later.

14. Then came Isaiah. Hezekiah had made a serious mistake that endangered the safety of his nation, and the prophet was sent to call this to his attention.

From a far country. If Hezekiah had entered into any formal agreement with Merodach-baladan, he was probably, by this statement, endeavoring to belittle the effects of such a pact. Joshua considered it proper to enter into a league with the Gibeonites on the consideration that they were from a "very far country" (Joshua 9:9–15). Hezekiah may also have felt that the distance of Babylonia from Judah would excuse his entering into friendly relations with Merodach-baladan. Through Isaiah the Lord had urged His people not to associate themselves with foreign powers but put their trust in God (Isa. 8:9–13; 30:1–7; 31:1–5).

Babylon. That is, the country of Babylonia. The Bible uses the same term for the country as for the capital city. Merodach-baladan, a Chaldean from the south of Babylonia, did not at this time hold the city of Babylon, for the Assyrians had placed another vassal king there; he was in exile, possibly in Elam, though he probably still had many supporters in Babylonia. At this time Babylon, subject to Assyria, was regarded as a weak, insignificant nation, so far distant that it would never be a threat. But already it was becoming a subject of prophetic attention (Isa. 13; 14:1–23; 43:14; 46:1, 2; 47:1–15; Micah 4:10). Soon Babylon and not Assyria would be the great enemy, and the power that would ultimately effect Judah's downfall.

15. What have they seen? They saw what Hezekiah chose to show them. How great was his opportunity to witness for God! God had healed him from a deadly disease. The striking miracle of the shadow on the sundial had awakened widespread interest. Hezekiah might have borne witness to the wonderful mercy and power of God, and have

sent Merodach-baladan's envoys back to their homeland with a knowledge of what God could and does do for His children on earth. But he utterly failed. The same question that came to Hezekiah comes to us today. The Lord asks us what it is that people see in our homes and our lives.

Among my treasures. Hezekiah was too much concerned with his earthly treasures. Far better it would have been if he had valued aright the heavenly Treasure, and had given these Babylonian envoys a glimpse of the Pearl of great price.

17. Carried into Babylon. In about a century this prediction was fulfilled. The armies of Nebuchadnezzar carried off Judah's treasures to Babylon (chs. 24, 25).

18. Thy sons. "Sons," in Hebrew, often stands simply for posterity. Manasseh, Hezekiah's son, was taken to Babylon by the Assyrians (2 Chron. 33:11). In Nebuchadnezzar's time many of the royal family were carried away into Babylonian captivity (2 Kings 24:12; 25:6, 7). This was fulfilled in the case of Daniel and his three friends (see Dan. 1:3–7).

19. Good is the word. Hezekiah acknowledged that the words of Isaiah were the words of the Lord and he could not but acknowledge that these words were good. He knew that he deserved this rebuke.

Peace and truth. Rather, "peace and stability." The Hebrew word here translated "truth" comes from the root 'aman (adopted into English as "amen"), which means "to confirm," "to support." Hezekiah was particularly pleased over the fact that the threatened judgment was not to fall in his day, but that there would be a continuance of prosperity and peace during his reign. It was a natural but a selfish reaction. Hezekiah should have been concerned over the troubles that his rash action would bring upon his posterity.

20. A pool. The pool is believed to be the inner pool of Siloam to the southwest of the ancient City of David, and the conduit, the famous Siloam tunnel. Water was brought from the Gihon in the Kidron Valley. The tunnel was termed Shiloah or Siloam, meaning "sent," or "conducted," and the reservoir was the pool of Siloam (John 9:7). The tunnel was 1,749 ft. (533 m.) in length.

In 1880 an interesting inscription was discovered on the walls of this tunnel, written in Hebrew, and thought to belong to the time of Hezekiah. It tells how the workmen beginning at both ends and excavating toward each other, finally met in the center. The achievement of Hezekiah's engineers was an amazing device whereby a supply of water was insured to the residents of the city in time of siege. Comparable tunnels are found at Gezer and Megiddo. For a translation of the Siloam inscription see p. 87.

21. Hezekiah slept. Hezekiah's funeral was marked by unusual honors, his burial being in "the chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David," with "all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem" giving him honor (2 Chron. 32:33).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–19PK 340–348

1–3PK 340

1–7CH 381

4–6PK 341

7–11PK 340–342

12–19PK 344–347

CHAPTER 21

1 *Manasseh's reign.* 3 *His great idolatry.* 10 *His wickedness causeth prophecies against Judah.* 17 *Amon succeedeth him.* 19 *Amon's wicked reign.* 23 *He being slain by his servants, and those murderers slain by the people, Josiah is made king.*

1. Manasseh. On Manasseh's accession and reign see p. 88.

Hephzi-bah. Literally, "my delight is in her." According to Jewish tradition Hephzibah was the daughter of the prophet Isaiah. No weight need be attached to this tradition. The name is later applied to Zion restored (Isa. 62:4).

2. Which was evil. Manasseh had a good father, but he did not follow in his father's footsteps. The evil seeds sown by Ahaz had produced their fruit of iniquity in many of the inhabitants of the land, and now that Hezekiah was gone, evil once more came into the ascendancy.

3. Built up again. Manasseh did much to counteract the good done by his father. The idolatrous, licentious, cruel, and superstitious rites in use among the surrounding nations, which had been prohibited by Hezekiah, were brought back. Paganism revived, idols were worshiped, and Judah went far along the path that was to fill up the measure of the nation's iniquity.

Altars for Baal. The worship of Baal, which had flourished under Athaliah (ch. 11:18) and Ahaz (2 Chron. 28:2), and which was so common in Israel, was now brought back to Judah.

Host of heaven. The sun, moon, and stars. The worship of the sun accounted for the sun chariots and horses that were placed at the entrance to the Temple (ch. 23:11).

6. Pass through the fire. The awful rite of human sacrifice seems to have had a peculiar fascination for wicked men. Ahaz had burned his son in the fire (ch. 16:3; 2 Chron. 28:3), and in the last days of Judah this cruel abomination was mentioned as one of the outstanding offenses (Jer. 7:31, 32; 19:2-6; 32:35; Eze. 16:20; 20:26; 23:37).

Familiar spirits. Such practices were forbidden to the Hebrews under penalty of death (Lev. 20:27).

7. In the house. Manasseh went further in his abominations than any of the kings of Judah before him. This abomination that Manasseh placed in the Temple, Josiah later brought out and burned at the brook Kidron (ch. 23:6).

9. Than did the nations. The heathen inhabitants of Palestine were destroyed because of their debasing practices, but now the professed people of God had sunk so low that they surpassed the heathen in their corrupt and abominable worship. Immorality, cruelty, and oppression went hand in hand with the degradation of religion. The terrible sin of Judah lay in the fact that they forsook their own pure form of religion and the one true God for the most corrupt forms of worship and the most debased types of idolatry.

10. The prophets. None of the prophets contemporary with Manasseh are certainly known. Isaiah was one of the first to fall in the religious persecution (see PK 382).

11. The Amorites. The Amorites appear here as representatives of the old Canaanite nations (see Gen. 15:16; 1 Kings 21:26; Eze. 16:3; Amos 2:9, 10).

12. His ears shall tingle. See the same phrase in 1 Sam. 3:11 and Jer. 19:3.

13. The line of Samaria. God will measure Jerusalem by the same standard by which He had measured Samaria (see Amos 7:7-9; Lam. 2:8). No partiality will be shown. Inasmuch as Judah had before her the example of her sister Israel and had failed to profit by the example, she will be held even more accountable.

As a man wipeth a dish. Jerusalem will be a mere dish in the hand of the Lord, to be thoroughly cleansed by Him. The word “man” does not occur in the Hebrew, and the verb should be translated with a general subject, “as someone wipes a dish.”

14. Of their enemies. See Deut. 28:36, 37; Isa. 42:22, 24; Jer. 30:15, 16.

15. Since the day. The Lord had borne long with His people. He treated them better than they deserved, sparing them time and again when their sins merited destruction.

16. Shed innocent blood. Manasseh was not content with encouraging evil; he put forth strenuous efforts to discourage good. There were many people who endeavored to remain faithful to God who now became the objects of his bitter hatred. Throughout the land the righteous were persecuted. Isaiah, who had been so stalwart a witness for truth and righteousness, suffered martyrdom at the hands of those who were determined to oppose the religious and political reforms for which he labored (see PK 382).

17. The rest of the acts. The most important of the items concerning Manasseh that the writer of Kings omits are his capture by the captains of the king of Assyria, his removal to Babylon, his repentance there, his restoration to his kingdom, and his religious reforms upon his return (2 Chron. 33:11–19). Esarhaddon includes Manasseh in a list of 22 kings of Western Asia of whom he demanded timber to be sent to Nineveh. Ashurbanipal, who succeeded Esarhaddon, includes Manasseh in a list of 22 kings who paid tribute to him.

His sin. The account of Manasseh in Kings gives only a few details concerning the iniquities of his reign. Not only did he offer his own son as a human sacrifice but he encouraged such abominations in the Valley of Hinnom (2 Chron. 33:6; cf. 2 Kings 23:10). It was evidently he who permitted the establishment of houses for the sodomites next to the Temple (2 Kings 23:7) and who may have removed the ark of the covenant from the Temple (2 Chron. 35:3).

18. Of his own house. There is no record of any kings of Judah from Ahaz onward being buried in the sepulchers of the kings of Judah.

Garden of Uzza. Both Manasseh and his son Amon (v. 26) were buried here. There is no further information available concerning this site. It was probably a garden formerly owned by a man named Uzza which was in the neighborhood of the palace gardens and was purchased for use as a burial plot.

19. Amon. This name is identical with that of the Egyptian sun-god Amen. It would appear that Manasseh selected this name for his son to show his regard for that Egyptian deity.

20. That which was evil. Manasseh’s apostasy had left a stamp of evil upon Amon that shaped his life beyond recall. During the latter part of Manasseh’s reign the idolatrous party had been held in check (2 Chron. 33:16), but now it regained control, and the entire land was swept along in a tide of iniquity. As usual, moral and religious license went hand in hand. The prophet Zephaniah, who wrote during the time of Josiah, has given a graphic description of the unhappy situation (see Zeph. 1:8, 9; 3:1–4).

22. Forsook the Lord God. Amon seems to have given up all pretense of being a worshiper of Jehovah. He refused to humble himself before the Lord as his father had done and “trespassed more and more” (2 Chron. 33:23).

23. Conspired against him. No reason for the conspiracy is given. There might have been some personal grudge against the king on the part of the palace officials, or the

assassination might have been the result of a reaction against the extreme idolatry of the king. Whatever the cause, the conspiracy testifies to dissatisfaction with royal policy.

24. All them that had conspired. Some encouragement is to be found in the fact that assassination was regarded as a crime and that the conspirators were punished by popular demand. What the intentions of the conspirators were, has not been revealed. Some have conjectured that it was their purpose to put an end to the house of David and place a new dynasty upon the throne. Had this been the intention, however, it is hardly likely that Josiah would have been allowed to live. He was in the power of the conspirators.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–26PK 381–383

11, 14, 16 PK 382

21–24PK 383

CHAPTER 22

1 *Josiah's good reign.* 3 *He taketh care for the repair of the temple.* 8 *Hilkiah having found a book of the law, Josiah sendeth to Huldah to enquire of the Lord.* 15 *Huldah prophesieth the destruction of Jerusalem, but respite thereof in Josiah's time.*

1. Eight years old. Since Amon was only 24 years old at his death and Josiah was then already 8, Amon must have been married as early as 15 and had a son at 16. Thus it is extremely unlikely that he had any son older than Josiah.

Thirty and one years. See p. 77.

2. That which was right. The young king was of a deeply religious nature, and in spite of the prevailing apostasy, resisted every temptation set before him to walk in his father's footsteps. As early as the eighth year of his reign he began to seek after the Lord (2 Chron. 34:3).

To the right hand or to the left. A common phrase in the times of Moses and Joshua (Deut. 5:32; 17:11, 20; 28:14; Joshua 1:7; 23:6), but seldom used in the later Scriptures.

3. The eighteenth year. Josiah began his work of reform in the 12th year of his reign, purging Judah of its high places, groves, and images (2 Chron. 34:3). Jeremiah began his prophetic ministry in Josiah's 13th year (Jer. 1:2). Five years later Josiah began his work of repair on the Temple.

Shaphan. Shaphan is frequently mentioned in the book of Jeremiah. His son Ahikam was the influential friend of Jeremiah (Jer. 26:24). Another son, Elasah, was sent by Zedekiah as an envoy to Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 29:3). Yet another son, Gemariah, is mentioned as one of the princes who tried to induce Jehoiakim not to burn Jeremiah's roll (Jer. 36:12, 25). Jaazaniah, yet another son, is mentioned as among the "seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel" (Eze. 8:11). Gedaliah, who was made governor of Judea by Nebuchadnezzar after the destruction of Jerusalem, was his grandson (2 Kings 25:22; Jer. 39:14; 40:5). Michaiah, another grandson, heard Baruch read Jeremiah's roll and reported its contents to the princes (Jer. 36:10–13).

4. Hilkiah the high priest. Hilkiah was the son of Shallum (1 Chron. 6:13) or Meshullam (1 Chron. 9:11), and his "son," or grandson (see Neh. 11:11; 1 Chron. 6:13, 14; see on 1 Kings 19:16; 1 Chron. 2:7) was Seraiah, high priest when Jerusalem fell (1 Chron. 6:14, 15; 2 Kings 25:18, 21; Jer. 52:24, 27). Seraiah, in turn was the father of Jehozadak, who was carried into captivity (1 Chron. 6:15). Joshua, the high priest at the time of the return from the captivity in the time of Cyrus, was a son of Jehozadak, or

Jozadak (Ezra 3:2, 8; 5:2; 10:18; Neh. 12:26). Ezra was also a descendant of Hilkiah (Ezra 7:1).

Have gathered. Evidently a collection for the repair of the Temple had been in progress for some time. In the time of Joash a similar collection was taken up (2 Kings 12:9, 10). The money was gathered from Ephraim and Manasseh as well as from Judah and Benjamin (2 Chron. 34:9).

7. Dealt faithfully. Compare 2 Kings 12:15. The names of many of these overseers are given in 2 Chron. 34:12.

8. Book of the law. See on 2 Chron. 34:14.

9. Have gathered. Literally, “poured out.” That is, from the chest containing the money (see 2 Kings 12:9–11).

11. Rent his clothes. Josiah was deeply stirred as Shaphan read to him the Lord’s messages from the ancient, sacred volume. He understood clearly that the path of disobedience would bring a terrible curse upon the nation, but that obedience would bring blessing, life, and prosperity.

12. Ahikam. The friend and protector of Jeremiah (Jer. 26:24), the father of Gedaliah, governor of Judea after Nebuchadnezzar’s capture of Jerusalem (2 Kings 25:22).

13. Enquire of the Lord. The emissaries consisted of a number of Josiah’s most trusted servants. The king sensed the seriousness of the issues at stake. Knowing how far the people had wandered from the paths of righteousness and to what extent they had forsaken the Lord, he knew the extreme dangers that faced the nation. He determined to do everything in his power to save his people.

14. Huldah the prophetess. A number of prophets were active during the reign of Josiah. Jeremiah was already engaged in his important work (Jer. 1:2). Habakkuk and Zephaniah also prophesied during the reign of Josiah (Zeph. 1:1; PK 384, 385, 389). No reason is given as to why Huldah was selected for the present interview. Among the prophetesses mentioned in the Bible are Miriam (Ex. 15:20), Deborah (Judges 4:4), Noadiah (Neh. 6:14), Anna (Luke 2:36), and the four daughters of Philip (Acts 21:8, 9).

Keeper of the wardrobe. Shallum, the husband of Huldah, had charge of either the vestments of the priests in the Temple or the royal wardrobe. Either office would make him a personage of some importance.

College. Heb. *mishneh*. Literally, “second,” that is, “second part” or “second quarter.” The reference is probably to the new or outer city—the expansion of Jerusalem to the north of the old city, which had been enclosed by the wall of Manasseh (2 Chron. 33:14; cf. Zeph. 1:10, where *mishneh* is translated “second”). According to Neh. 3:9, 12, there were two “half” parts of Jerusalem. The translation “college” is the rendering of the Targums, which take *mishneh* in the sense of the later Mishnah, “instruction,” from the idea “to repeat,” hence “to teach” and “to learn.”

16. I will bring evil. The nation was doomed because of its iniquity. The people had so long followed a course of iniquity that they had become hardened in their sins. Their senses were so deadened that wrong appeared right and evil was preferred before good. Under such conditions the ruin of the nation could not be averted by a temporary reform.

All the words. That is, the doom foretold in Lev. 26:16–39 and Deut. 28:15–68.

17. My wrath shall be kindled. See Deut. 29:25–28. As the wrath of God fell upon the chosen people and resulted in the destruction of the nation, so judgments will fall with

equal force upon the impenitent at the end of the world (Rev. 14:18, 19; 15:7, 8; 16:1–21; PK 389).

Not be quenched. God's wrath had been kindled like a fire that was not to be quenched. Once kindled, that fire was to burn until the nation had been consumed (see 2 Kings 23:26, 27; Jer. 4:4; 15:1–9; Eze. 15:2–8). The judgment pronounced on Manasseh (2 Kings 21:12–15) was repeated to Josiah, since, apparently, no effort at reform would now save the guilty nation. This was the awful truth that Huldah revealed, and that soon became the outstanding burden of Jeremiah. The sentence of condemnation had been given.

19. Tender. Humility and tenderness of heart are among the outstanding Christian graces. The tender heart of Josiah caused him to respond to the influences of God's Holy Spirit and to be deeply moved by the sins of the people that were bringing so much of woe and distress.

20. In peace. There are times when even death is a blessing. In mercy God would allow Josiah to go to his grave before Judah was involved in final ruin. Josiah himself was slain in battle (ch. 23:29), but his death spared him from witnessing the terrible calamity a few years later.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–20PK 384–400

1, 2 PK 384

3–8PK 392

8–10PK 393

13, 14 PK 398

15–20PK 399

CHAPTER 23

1 *Josiah causeth the book to be read in a solemn assembly.* 3 *He reneweth the covenant of the Lord.* 4 *He destroyeth idolatry.* 15 *He burnt dead men's bones upon the altar of Beth-el as was forepropheesied.* 21 *He kept a most solemn passover.* 24 *He put away witches and all abomination.* 26 *God's final wrath against Judah.* 29 *Josiah, provoking Pharaoh-nechoh, is slain at Megiddo.* 31 *Jehoahaz, succeeding him, is imprisoned by Pharaoh-nechoh, who made Jehoiakim king.* 36 *Jehoiakim's wicked reign.*

1. All the elders. Wise leaders consult with leaders. Josiah gathered together all the leading men of the nation in order to see whether something could be done to avert the threatened calamity, or to cause the coming judgment to be tempered with mercy. In announcing doom, God did not preclude repentance and reformation. Nothing would be lost by setting before the people the terrible fate that threatened if they persisted in their iniquity. What was needed was a return to God and righteousness, and Josiah determined that every possible effort should be put forth to bring about a national revival.

2. All the men of Judah. As far as possible, all the men of the nation were to be brought together to Jerusalem to hear the message of God. The solemn conclave would include men of all classes and occupations, particularly the priests and prophets—the religious leaders of the people who might be most influential in helping to bring about the desired reform.

3. A pillar. Probably one of the great bronze pillars (see 1 Kings 7:15, 21). According to Ezekiel's ritual for royal worship in the restored kingdom, the prince should "stand by the post of the gate" (Eze. 46:2).

Made a covenant. This was a renewal of the covenant that the Lord made with Israel at Sinai, whereby the people had agreed to obey the Lord and walk in His ways (Ex. 19:5–8; 24:3–8). The nation had broken that covenant and thus had forfeited the promises the Lord had made. A renewal of blessing could come only from a renewal of the covenant, and it was thus that Josiah made this solemn agreement before God to keep His commandments and to abide by the covenant made between God and His people at Sinai.

Stood to the covenant. The people took their stand for God, signifying their acceptance of the terms of the covenant and pledging their loyalty to Jehovah.

4. The second order. Three distinct orders in the priestly and Levitical organization are here referred to (see ch. 25:18).

Out of the temple. It seems that the purging in the 12th year of Josiah's reign (2 Chron. 34:3) was only a partial work. The presence of the vessels made for the service of Baal, for Asherah, and for the heavenly host, in the sacred Temple, indicates the extent to which idolatry had taken hold of the people of Judah. The nation had almost completely alienated themselves from God and reverted to the ways of the heathen they had dispossessed. Josiah determined to exterminate the last vestige of idolatry from the land.

All the vessels. This would include not only vessels in the strictest sense of the term but the whole apparatus of worship, including utensils, images, altars, etc.

Burned them. This was in accord with Deut. 7:25; 12:3 (see 1 Chron. 14:11, 12).

Kidron. The Kidron was the valley running north and south to the east of Jerusalem between the city and the Mt. of Olives. The fields of Kidron were probably the northern part of this valley where the ravine expands considerably (see Jer. 31:40). Asa had burned the idol of Maachah by the brook Kidron (1 Kings 15:13).

Unto Beth-el. To a place regarded as already cursed and unclean, so that the soil of Judah itself might not be further defiled.

5. Had ordained. Jeroboam had "made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi" (1 Kings 12:31). The practice of Manasseh and Amon was probably the same.

Round about Jerusalem. See v. 13.

Unto Baal. The enumeration of these various gods gives an indication of the extent to which the people of Judah had forsaken the Lord. The gods are probably listed in terms of the degrees of veneration in which they were held. Baal was the great storm god (see on 1 Kings 16:31).

6. The grove. This was the graven image of the Asherah that Manasseh had made (ch. 21:3, 7).

Burned it. The Asherah was probably made of wood, which would burn, with a metal overlay (see Deut. 7:25).

To powder. This is similar to the treatment accorded the golden calf in the wilderness (Ex. 32:20).

Children of the people. That is, the common people. The same expression occurs in Jer. 26:23, where it is thus translated. The common people were not buried in rock-hewn sepulchers but in ordinary graves. Since graves were considered unclean, the burial plot in the ravine of the Kidron was considered an appropriate place for the powder of the ruined idols.

7. The sodomites. The fact that such depraved individuals, both men and women, devoted to religious prostitution, were quartered in a house adjoining the Temple is a sad

commentary on the moral collapse that had taken place among the professed people of God. The vile and immoral practices here carried on were part of the idolatrous ceremonial of the times. Ezekiel denounced the “wicked abominations” carried on in the Temple area in his day (Eze. 8:5–17). The worst infamies of Canaanite nature worship had made their way into the holy Temple of God. Judah could hardly have sunk to lower depths.

8. Geba to Beer-sheba. That is, from the northern to the southern extremity of Judah (see 1 Kings 15:22; Zech. 14:10).

9. Came not up. The priests who had been serving at the idolatrous shrines and who had been summoned to Jerusalem were not permitted to officiate in the sacred responsibilities of the Temple service. In Ezekiel’s description of the restored state the Levitical priests who had gone astray were henceforth not permitted to participate in the holy services of the Temple, although they were permitted to perform certain of the more menial services (Eze. 44:10–14).

Of the unleavened bread. Although not permitted to participate in the sacred services of the Temple, these priests were not cut off from all support. They were treated much the same as those priests who were found to have blemishes on their persons (see Lev. 21:17–23).

10. Defiled Topheth. This was a place in the Valley of Hinnom where was practiced the barbarous cult of offering human beings as burnt sacrifices to Molech (see Isa. 30:33; Jer. 7:31; 19:6; 32:35), probably including sons of Ahaz and Manasseh (2 Kings 16:3; 21:6; 2 Chron. 28:3; 33:6).

Hinnom. A valley west and south of Jerusalem, the southern part of which later came to be regarded as a place of destruction and abomination. This was due to the horrors of its human sacrifices, to the final pollution of it by Josiah, and to the fact that it later became the city’s refuse dump. In NT times the Valley of Hinnom, Heb. *Ge Hinnom*, was used as the symbol of the place of destruction of the wicked. In the following references the word “hell” is in every case a translation of the Greek *geenna*, a transliteration of the Hebrew *Ge Hinnom*: Matt. 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:8, 9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43–48; Luke 12:5; James 3:6.

Molech. On the Molech sacrifices, see on Lev. 18:21; Jer. 7:21.

11. The horses. In ancient times the sun was frequently depicted as a charioteer who daily drove his horses across the sky.

Chariots of the sun. Sun chariots were known in ancient Persia, and were familiar to the Greeks and Romans. It is interesting to have this early trace of such a custom among the Hebrews. Manasseh and Amon must have gone to great lengths in adopting the forms of heathen worship they found in use in the countries about them.

12. Upper chamber. This probably refers to an upper chamber constructed by Ahaz over some structure in the Temple court, since the writer is here dealing with Temple defilement. The altars may have been for star worship, which was especially carried on from housetops (see Jer. 19:13; 32:29; Zeph. 1:5).

13. Before Jerusalem. That is, toward the east of the city. Directions were determined from the standpoint of facing east. The left hand would thus be the north, the right hand would thus be the south, and the back would be the west. See 1 Kings 11:5–8 for an account of the high places that Solomon built for strange gods. Good kings, such as

Asa, Jehoshaphat, and Hezekiah, doubtless did not permit the worship of strange gods at these high places, but probably allowed the worship of Jehovah to be carried on there.

Mount of corruption. Presumably the southern slope of the Mt. of Olives, evidently so called by way of contempt, to show the detestation of the abominable idol worship carried on to the east of the holy Temple.

Did the king defile. The record says, not that these high places were broken down, but only that they were defiled. Some of them, presumably, consisted largely of native stones or flat surfaces of rock with holes scooped in them for receiving libations, etc. Such sites are well known in Palestine. It is hardly conceivable that buildings erected by Solomon for the worship of Ashtoreth, Chemosh, and Milcom would have been allowed to remain through the reformatory movements of Asa, Jehoshaphat, and Hezekiah. Hezekiah “removed the high places,” “utterly” destroying “them all” (2 Kings 18:4; 2 Chron. 31:1). Yet such was the case (PK 405).

14. Bones of men. Human corpses and bones were regarded by the Hebrews as unclean and regulations were issued regarding their handling (Num. 19:11, 16). For the bones of dead men to be brought in contact with these high places would be regarded as defiling them forever and making them henceforth permanently unfit as places of worship.

15. Brake down. The high place at Bethel was doubtless a building, such as a tabernacle or temple, for it was broken down and burned. Some time had passed since the kingdom of Israel had come to its end, but evidently worship was still being carried on at the shrine Jeroboam had constructed at Bethel.

16. Burned them. The burning of human bones on an altar would be particularly offensive. Josiah resorted to such an act to show his utter contempt for the terrible form of worship that Jeroboam had instituted in place of the worship of Jehovah, and to make certain that this shrine would never again be used for religious purposes. The bones burned were those of priests who had officiated in the services at these altars (see 2 Chron. 34:5).

Man of God. See 1 Kings 13:1, 2.

17. Title. Heb. *ṣiyyun*, “signpost,” “monument.” Josiah saw a certain memorial stone over a grave and inquired as to its identity. It was an ancient Hebrew custom for stone markers to be erected at burial plots (Gen. 35:20).

Man of God. See 1 Kings 13:23–30.

18. Out of Samaria. This simply identifies the old prophet who deceived the prophet from Judea.

19. Cities of Samaria. Josiah went as far as Naphtali (2 Chron. 34:6). Samaria was then under the control of Assyria. Assyria was weak at this time and probably did not attempt to interfere with these excursions of Josiah into territories under its domain (see pp. 66, 67).

20. Slew all the priests. In fulfillment of 1 Kings 13:2. Josiah was doing his utmost to wipe out idolatry. He made examples of those who were leaders of the people in apostasy.

21. Keep the passover. A return to the observance of the ancient Mosaic rites.

The book of this covenant. The book of the Mosaic law that Hilkiah had found in the Temple (2 Kings 22:8; cf. Ex. 12:3–20; Lev. 23:5; Num. 9:2, 3; Deut. 16:2–6).

22. *Such a passover.* The details of this Passover service are given in 2 Chron. 35:1–18.

23. *Eighteenth year.* The repair of the Temple also began in this year (2 Kings 22:3–6). Since the Passover was held on the 14th day of Nisan, the first month of the religious year (Ex. 12:2, 6, 18; 2 Chron. 35:1), it is obvious that Josiah began his regnal year with Tishri rather than Nisan, thus allowing about 5 months for the Temple repairs to be made before the celebration of the Passover in the same year.

24. *Familiar spirits.* Demonology had taken strong hold of the Israelites. The people were serving the ruler of darkness instead of the Lord of heaven. Not angels but devils were their daily companions. They were giving ear to evil spirits rather than to the Holy Spirit. Josiah endeavored to clear the land of everything that had to do with demonism and the monstrous abominations that the worship of devils brought in its wake.

The images. Heb. *teraphim*. These were household gods (see on Gen. 31:19). Their worship had a peculiar appeal to the Hebrews, who clung to these idols with tenacity. Rachel stole the teraphim of her father, Laban (Gen. 31:19). Micah the Ephraimite had teraphim in his household (Judges 17:5; 18:14–20). Michal, the wife of David, possessed one of these images (1 Sam. 19:13).

Of the law. It was the purpose of Josiah to bring the law into full operation in every phase of national life. In this way Josiah hoped at least to mitigate the ruin with which the nation was threatened.

25. *Like unto him.* Similar words were employed in regard to Hezekiah a short time previously (see on ch. 18:5). It seems that no other king in Judah's history applied himself so vigorously to an enforcement of the Mosaic law.

With all his heart. An echo of Deut. 6:5. Josiah was interested not merely in a formal compliance with the dictates of the law of Moses, but in obedience to the spirit and full intent of the law—justice, mercy, and righteousness (see Jer. 22:15, 16).

26. *Turned not.* Iniquity had been so brazen that to permit it to pass without punishment would not have worked for the future good of the nation. Even if the present generation was apparently repentant, and sought to effect drastic reforms, future generations, who would learn that flagrant iniquity and idolatry of a previous generation had been permitted with impunity, would be emboldened in iniquity. Unfortunately, also, the reforms that good King Josiah inaugurated affected the majority only superficially. A careful study of the prophecies of Jeremiah reveals that the religious condition of the people was far from ideal (see Jer. 2:12, 13; 3:6–11; etc.).

Manasseh had provoked. See ch. 21:1–9.

27. *Remove Judah.* This was also the repeated warning of Jeremiah (Jer. 4:5–20; 6:1–4; 7:12–16, 20, 32–34; 11:17, 22, 23; 16:9–13). Zephaniah, too, pronounced the nation's imminent doom (Zeph. 1:2–18; 3:1–8). Calls for reformation were still given and promises of forgiveness and personal acceptance were made on the basis of true repentance (Jer. 7:3–7; Zeph. 2:1–3). But by this time it had become clear that no genuine repentance was in prospect and that national ruin was inevitable (Jer. 7:8–34).

Cast off this city. It was not easy for the Lord to cast off Jerusalem. That city had been chosen by Him as His own city. It was to be the capital, not only of Judah, but of the world. The Lord intended that from Jerusalem streams of light and salvation should go out to encircle the globe. The Israelites prevented the carrying out of the original design.

Now God's purpose will be carried out in the creation of the new earth, with the New Jerusalem as the capital and the multitudes of the redeemed constituting the new nation.

28. *Rest of the acts.* Josiah's reformation took place in his 18th year. The king reigned a total of 31 years. Of these last 13 years of his reign nothing is recorded.

29. *Pharaoh-nechoh.* The well-known Necho II of Egypt's Twenty-sixth Dynasty, who reigned from 610 to 595 B.C.

Went up. Assyria and Egypt were at this time in alliance against Babylon. Under Nabopolassar (626–605), Babylon had taken the place of Assyria as the great military power of the world. Nineveh fell in 612, and a small remnant of Assyrians now held out several years longer in Haran. They had the assistance of Egypt against the rising power of Babylon, which was swiftly carrying all the world before it.

Against the king of Assyria. Actually, Necho marched northward to *assist* the Assyrians *against* Babylon (see 2 Chron. 35:20). Either: (1) the Heb. 'al, "against," is to be read 'el, "towards" or "for the sake of," as is frequently done in the Dead Sea Scrolls, or (2) the term "Assyria" is used to designate Babylon as the power now ruling most of the territory formerly belonging to the Assyrian Empire. The classical writers often use Assyria in this sense (see Herodotus i. 178).

Euphrates. It was evidently en route to Mesopotamia to help the Assyrians attack Haran that Necho went against Carchemish (2 Chron. 35:20). This city became an Egyptian stronghold for several years, until Nebuchadnezzar defeated Necho there in 605 B.C., as is now known from the Babylonian Chronicle.

Josiah went against him. Necho at this time had no quarrel with Josiah (2 Chron. 35:21), but wished simply to get to the Euphrates to engage the forces of Babylon.

Megiddo. The important fortress in the southern part of the plain of Esdraelon, on the caravan route from Egypt to northern Syria. Josiah presumably took up his position at a point where the road emerges onto the plain, in order to strike as the Egyptians issued from the pass.

30. *In a chariot.* Josiah was fatally wounded at Megiddo. He had entered the battle disguised (2 Chron. 35:22), as had Ahab in the battle against the Syrians at which he lost his life (1 Kings 22:30). When hit by an arrow, Josiah sensed the serious nature of his wound and was taken away in another chariot to Jerusalem, dying either there or on the way (see on 2 Chron. 35:24).

Buried him. The author of Chronicles adds: "All Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah" (2 Chron. 35:24, 25). In contrast with the great mourning at the death of Josiah, the fate of his wicked sons was to be entirely unwept (Jer. 22:10, 18).

Jehoahaz. Jehoahaz also had the name of Shallum (1 Chron. 3:15; Jer. 22:11). Jehoiakim and not Jehoahaz was the elder son of Josiah and would normally have become king (v. 31; cf. v. 36). But for some reason the people intervened and made Jehoahaz king. Some have conjectured that there were two parties then in the land, one pro- and the other anti-Egyptian. It seems likely that Jehoiakim belonged to the former and Jehoahaz to the latter. The anti-Egyptian party prevailed and put Jehoahaz on the throne. During this time Necho was evidently in the north, on his campaign against the Babylonians at the Euphrates.

32. Which was evil. Only a brief record of Jehoahaz' reign has been preserved. Not even Josiah's sons clung to the reforms that he had instituted. The nation was once more on its way to doom.

33. Riblah. A site on the Orontes River, about 10 mi. (16 km.) south of Kadesh, and about 200 mi. (320 km.) north of the country of Judah. Nebuchadnezzar later made Riblah his headquarters during his campaigns in Palestine (2 Kings 25:6, 21; Jer. 39:5–7; 52:9–11, 27). On his return from Carchemish, Necho required Jehoahaz to appear before him at Riblah, and ascertaining the situation under which he had become king, put him in bonds. Riblah is now *Ribleh*.

To a tribute. Necho planned at this time to make Judah a vassal of Egypt, and for this reason deposed Jehoahaz.

34. Eliakim. Probably a member of a pro-Egyptian faction. Necho would therefore favor him (see on v. 30).

Turned his name. The new name would signify that he was now a new individual, owing his sovereignty to Egypt. Nebuchadnezzar followed a similar practice when he made Mattaniah king instead of his nephew, naming him Zedekiah (ch. 24:17).

Died there. This was in accord with the prophecy made by Jeremiah shortly after the Exile began (Jer. 22:10–12).

35. Gave the silver. See v. 33.

Of every one. The money exacted by Pharaoh came not from the king but from the people. When Assyria exacted 1,000 talents of silver from Menahem, the sum was secured by a levy on all the men of wealth (ch. 15:19, 20). In this instance, however, there appears to have been a general tax on everyone, poor and rich.

36. Twenty and five years. Since Jehoahaz was only 23 years old at this time (v. 31), Jehoiakim was the older. Josiah was 8 years old when he came to the throne and reigned 31 years (ch. 22:1). Thus he was 39 at the time of his death, when Jehoiakim was 25. Josiah was thus only about 14 or 15 years of age when Jehoiakim was born. Hebrew kings married at an early age, following the custom of Oriental lands then and now.

37. Which was evil. The evil deeds of Jehoiakim's reign are here not specifically enumerated. According to Jeremiah he was extravagant, covetous, oppressive, unjust, impious, and bloodthirsty (Jer. 22:13–17; 26:20–23; 36:23).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–30PK 400–406

2, 3 DA 216; PK 400

15–18PK 402

20, 24 PK 401

22, 25, 26 PK 405

31–37PK 412

CHAPTER 24

1 *Jehoiakim, first subdued by Nebuchadnezzar, then rebelling against him, procureth his own ruin.* 5 *Jehoiachin succeedeth him.* 7 *The king of Egypt is vanquished by the king of Babylon.* 8 *Jehoiachin's evil reign.* 10 *Jerusalem is taken and carried captive into Babylon.* 17 *Zedekiah is made king, and reigneth ill unto the utter destruction of Judah.*

1. Nebuchadnezzar. According to Dan. 1:1, Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem in the third year of Jehoiakim, which was the accession year of Nebuchadnezzar, or 605 B.C., if Jehoiakim's 4th year is to be equated with Nebuchadnezzar's 1st (Jer. 25:1; see p.

161 and note 7). According to the record in the Babylonian Chronicle, Nebuchadnezzar, the crown prince of Babylonia, defeated the Egyptians decisively in battles at Carchemish and near Hamath in the spring or early summer of 605 B.C., laying all Syria and Palestine open to the victorious Babylonians. Evidently this was when Jehoiakim of Judah became a vassal of Babylon and surrendered hostages, among them Daniel, to Nebuchadnezzar. Three years later he seems to have switched his allegiance back to Egypt, and his estimate of their renewed strength appeared in some degree correct when the Egyptians inflicted heavy losses on Nebuchadnezzar's army in 601 B.C. But Jehoiakim's rebellion showed a lack of political foresight, because the Babylonians quickly recovered from their setback, and returned to punish their disloyal vassals.

2. According to. See Jer. 4:20–29; 5:15–17; Heb. 1:6–10.

3. Commandment. God had used the nations to chastise Judah (see PK 385).

For the sins of Manasseh. Repeatedly Manasseh's sins are noted as the primary cause for the downfall of Judah (see 2 Kings 21:11, 12; 23:26; Jer. 15:4).

4. Innocent blood. Including that of Isaiah (PK 382). Isaiah certainly would not have looked upon the abominations of Manasseh in silence and complacency, but would surely have lifted up his voice in stern rebuke against the misdeeds of the king.

Would not pardon. The enormities of Manasseh were the climax in Judah's long course of evil. The cup of iniquity was full and judgment was ready to fall. The good reign of Josiah brought a suspension for a time, not a revocation of the sentence of doom. The point had been reached where God refused to pardon the national guilt. But national must always be distinguished from personal guilt (see on ch. 17:20).

5. The rest of the acts. Some of the details are obscure. We know that Nebuchadnezzar "bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon" (2 Chron. 36:6). Again, Jehoiakim was to be "buried with the burial of an ass ... beyond the gates of Jerusalem" (Jer. 22:19), and his dead body was to be "cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost" (Jer. 36:30). The two statements can be harmonized by assuming that the plan to take Jehoiakim to Babylon was abandoned, or that he died soon after his capture as a result of rough treatment by the Chaldeans. Some have conjectured that he was taken to Babylon and later released, as was Manasseh in Esarhaddon's reign (2 Chron. 33:11–13; cf. Eze. 19:5–9).

6. Jehoiachin. Except in one case (Jer. 52:31), Jeremiah calls this king either Coniah (Jer. 22:24, 28; 37:1) or Jeconiah (Jer. 24:1; 27:20; 28:4; 29:2). In Chronicles he is called both Jeconiah (1 Chron. 3:16, 17) and Jehoiachin (2 Chron. 36:9). In Esther 2:6 he is Jeconiah. In Jeconiah and Jehoiachin the two elements of the name are transposed. Both names mean "Jehovah will establish". Coniah means "Jehovah establishes," the sign of the future tense being cut off.

7. Came not again. In the battles at Carchemish and near Hamath the Egyptians had been decisively beaten in 605 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar, who then came into possession of Palestine. The Egyptians had inflicted heavy losses on Nebuchadnezzar's army in 601 B.C., but after that they seem to have been unable to challenge seriously his control over Palestine.

From the river of Egypt. As early as Thutmose I (see Vol. I, p. 145), Egypt had conquered Palestine and Syria as far as the Euphrates River. She was not always in undisputed possession of that area, but during the reign of Necho (610–595), she again

endeavored to bring that territory under control. The “river of Egypt” is probably the *Wadi el-‘Arish* (see on 1 Kings 8:65).

8. Eighteen years. The parallel passage in 2 Chron. 36:9 reads “eight years.” In that reference, however, the Syriac and several of the versions of the LXX read “eighteen.” Jehoiachin was not a child-king. When he was taken to Babylon he already had children (Jer. 22:28). Babylonian cuneiform documents of the year 592 B.C. also mention Jehoiachin and five of his sons.

Three months. More exactly, three months and ten days (2 Chron. 36:9).

Elnathan. One of the envoys sent by Jehoiakim to Egypt to bring back Urijah the prophet (Jer. 26:22), also one of the princes who urged Jehoiakim not to burn Jeremiah’s roll (Jer. 36:12, 25).

10. At that time. Nebuchadnezzar began his next campaign against Judah in the month of Kislev (Dec. 598-Jan. 597 B.C.), according to the Babylonian Chronicle.

The servants. That is, his generals. The occasion was Nebuchadnezzar’s second attack on Jerusalem. The first was in 605 B.C., the third year of Jehoiakim (Dan. 1:1).

12. Went out. In despair Jehoiachin surrendered. The date according to the Babylonian Chronicle was Adar 2, year 7 of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign in the Babylonian calendar (approximately March 16, 597 B.C.).

Eighth year. That is, the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar, following Jewish reckoning, according to which it had begun in the autumn of 598 B.C. It was still the 7th year according to Babylonian reckoning (see p. 161n).

The Three Campaigns of Nebuchadnezzar

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⁸Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (2 Ki 18:5). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.



3. All the treasures. Some of the vessels of the Temple had already been taken to Babylon in 605, in Nebuchadnezzar's first attack on Jerusalem (Dan. 1:2; 2 Chron. 36:7). No doubt the most valuable vessels that remained after the initial looting were now carried away. Some vessels were still allowed to remain (2 Kings 25:13–16; Jer. 27:18–20). Concerning the number of vessels taken to Babylon see Ezra 1:7–11.

As the Lord had said. Isaiah had made such a prediction at the time of the visit of the Babylonian envoys to Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:17; Isa. 39:6).

14. All Jerusalem. That is, the upper classes. By “good figs” (Jer. 24:1–7) Jeremiah symbolizes those who were carried away at this time. The prophet Ezekiel was among those carried away into Babylon. The years of his book are counted from the time of Jehoiachin's captivity (Eze. 1:1–3), 597 B.C. Taking away from Jerusalem its skilled workers would deprive the conquered city of that class of citizens who would be of most service in war, and would provide the conqueror with valuable helpers for his own extensive building enterprises.

15. Carried away. In fulfillment of the prophecies of Isaiah (2 Kings 20:18; Isa. 39:7), and Jeremiah (Jer. 22:24–30).

The king's mother. That she is mentioned first after the king, even before his wives, is indicative of her high rank.

The king's wives. Evidence that the king must have been more than “eight” years of age (see on v. 8).

The mighty. The chief civil and ecclesiastical functionaries—the princes, eunuchs, nobles, courtiers, elders, priests, prophets, and Levites (see Jer. 29:1, 2).

16. Men of might. The “mighty men of valour” (v. 14), the leading gentry of the land who were trained in war, and who, like the knights of medieval Europe, led the people in battle.

A thousand. The craftsmen and smiths with the 7,000 “men of might” would make 8,000, leaving 2,000 who belonged to the class of civil and ecclesiastical functionaries.

17. Mattaniah. The brother of Jehoiakim, and son of Josiah. He was thus the third son of Josiah to rule upon the throne of Judah (see 1 Chron. 3:15).

Zedekiah. Literally, “righteousness of Jehovah,” or, “Jehovah is righteousness.” Perhaps the Hebrews had something to say about the names they were given by their suzerains, for Nebuchadnezzar would hardly have chosen this name.

18. Eleven years. From 597 to 586 B.C.

Hamutal. Zedekiah was thus a full brother of Jehoahaz (ch. 23:31), but only a half brother of Jehoiakim (v. 36).

19. Which was evil. Zedekiah was a moral weakling (see 2 Chron. 36:12–16; Jer. 37:1, 2; 38:5; 52:2; Eze. 17:13–19; 21:25). There are indications that he at times endeavored to do that which was right but lacked the courage to abide by his convictions (Jer. 34:8–16; 37:2–21; 38:4–28).

20. Zedekiah rebelled. This clause introduces the events of the 25th chapter and would more appropriately appear at the beginning of that chapter. The 24th chapter appropriately closes with the word “presence.” The rebellion of Zedekiah against Babylon caused Nebuchadnezzar to come against Judah in a campaign and thus to bring that nation down in ruins. Early in the reign of Zedekiah there was a general expectation fostered by false prophets that there would be an early return of the exiles from Babylon and an end of the Babylonian yoke (Jer. 27:16; 28:1–4, 10, 11). It was probably in connection with this expectation that Zedekiah sent an embassy to Babylon (Jer. 29:3), and in the fourth year of his reign went to Babylon himself (Jer. 51:59). Jeremiah constantly sought to correct this impression, and counseled continued submission rather than revolt (Jer. 27:5–22; 28:5–17; 29:1–32). Zedekiah, however, continued his activities to throw off the Babylonian yoke, seeking for help from Egypt toward this end (Eze. 17:15; cf. Jer. 37:5; 44:30). The neighboring peoples of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Zidon were also anxious to throw off the yoke of Babylon, and had earlier sent ambassadors to Judah proposing a general revolt (Jer. 27:3–11).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1, 2 PK 438

1–7PK 422

13–16PK 438

17 PK 439

18–204T 181

CHAPTER 25

1 *Jerusalem is besieged. 4 Zedekiah taken, his sons slain, his eyes put out. 8 Nebuzar-adan defaceth the city, carrieth the remnant, except a few poor labourers, into captivity, 13 spoileth and carrieth away the treasures. 18 The nobles are slain at Riblah. 22 Gedaliah,*

who was set over them that remained, being slain, the rest flee into Egypt. 27 Evil-merodach advanceth Jehoiachin in his court.

1. The ninth year. See Jer. 39:1; 52:4. The ninth year of Zedekiah, by Jewish fall-to-fall reckoning, was 589/88 B.C. The tenth month of the Jewish year corresponds roughly to our January. On the day the siege of Jerusalem began, the Lord revealed this fact to Ezekiel in Babylonia (Eze. 24:1–14).

The tenth of the tenth month in 588 B.C. can be dated with reasonable accuracy to Jan. 15 by the Babylonian calendar, though the Jewish reckoning of this month may have differed (see p. 98; also p. 120, and the last entry on p. 123).

Against Jerusalem. Not only was Jerusalem besieged, but parts of the army were sent against “all the cities of Judah that were left” (Jer. 34:7).

Forts. Siegeworks, including sloping ramparts of earth from which battering-rams could attack the upper and weaker portions of the walls, and movable towers, to bring the attackers on a level with the defenders on the city walls.

2. Besieged. For details of the terrible siege, see Jer. 37, 38, 39.

3. Fourth month. The number of the fourth month is missing in the Hebrew, but it is correctly supplied in Jer. 52:6. The fourth month is approximately our July. In Zedekiah’s 11th year the ninth of the fourth month was probably July 19, 586 B.C. (see on v. 1).

Famine prevailed. By this time the famine had become so severe that defense was no longer possible. Mothers ate their own children in the extremity, and the skin of the sufferers became black and parched (Lam. 2:11, 12, 19, 20; 4:3–10; 5:10). The Lord had warned His people that such terrible conditions would be the result of transgression (Lev. 26:29; Deut. 28:53–57; Jer. 14:12–16; 15:2; 27:8, 13; Eze. 4:16, 17; 5:10, 12).

4. Broken up. An entrance may have been gained through a breach in the city wall made by battering-rams.

The men of war fled. The verb “fled” is missing here in the Hebrew, but is in the parallel passage of Jer. 39:4 and 52:7.

Between two walls. The flight was probably made down the Tyropoeon Valley, past the pool of Siloam, which was by the king’s garden (Neh. 3:15), near the junction of the Hinnom and Kidron valleys. A second wall had been built to the south and southwest of the old wall for the protection of the pool of Siloam (see 2 Chron. 32:4, 5; Isa. 22:9–11), and it was probably between this wall and the old wall of Zion that the flight took place. This would lead down to the Kidron Valley and thence toward the Arabah and the Jordan. See Jerusalem in Israelite Times.

Overtook him. Zedekiah’s capture by the Babylonians had been foretold (Jer. 38:23; Eze. 12:13).

6. To Riblah. Nebuchadnezzar was at this time making preparations for his siege of Tyre, which took 13 years. Riblah, about 10 mi. (16 km.) south of Kadesh in the Plain of Coele-Syria, provided convenient headquarters from which to conduct both these operations. Necho also made Riblah his headquarters for his campaign through Syria to Carchemish (ch. 23:33).

They gave judgment. “He gave judgment” (Jer. 39:5; 52:9), indicating that it was Nebuchadnezzar himself who acted as judge and passed sentence. The charge in this instance was rebellion—a breaking of the solemn oath that Zedekiah had made (2 Kings 24:20). Nebuchadnezzar, who had become acquainted with the God of the Hebrews,

required Zedekiah to swear his allegiance by an oath in the name of God (2 Chron. 36:13).

7. Slew the sons. In Jeremiah's endeavor to turn Zedekiah away from rebellion, the prophet had warned the king that unless he would make his peace with the Babylonians, his wives and children would fall into enemy hands (Jer. 38:23).

Put out the eyes. Compare the punishment meted out by the Philistines to Samson, who was blinded and bound with fetters of brass (Judges 16:21). Jeremiah had repeatedly warned Zedekiah that if he persisted in rebellion, he would be taken to Babylon (Jer. 32:4, 5; 34:3; 38:23). Ezekiel had predicted that although he would be taken to Babylon, he would not see it (Eze. 12:13).

8. The nineteenth year. This synchronization definitely fixes the date for the end of Judah's history, since the years of Nebuchadnezzar are astronomically established (see p. 152). The synchronization of Zedekiah's 11th and last year (v. 2) with Nebuchadnezzar's 19th year, agrees with Jer. 32:1, where Zedekiah's 10th year is synchronized with Nebuchadnezzar's 18th.

9. Burnt the house. This act brought an end to Solomon's Temple. In addition to the Temple, the palace and many other important structures in Jerusalem were put to the torch. The city was left a place of ruin and desolation—a striking exhibit of the destruction that sin brings in its wake. The conflagration did not come without warning (Jer. 21:10; 32:29; 34:2; 37:8, 10; 38:18, 23).

10. Brake down. The walls were still in ruins until repaired by Ezra (Ezra 1:1–4; 7:6–9; 9:9) and Nehemiah (Neh. 3; 6:15), long after Cyrus had granted repatriation in his year 1 (2 Chron. 36:22, 23; Ezra 1:1–11).

11. The fugitives. These were the people who had previously deserted to the Babylonians during the siege. Jeremiah had repeatedly urged submission (Jer. 27:12; 38:2–4, 17–23), and was himself falsely accused of falling away to the Babylonians (Jer. 37:13, 14).

The remnant. Three classes of people are distinguished in this verse: (1) those left in Jerusalem, (2) those who had deserted to the Babylonians, (3) the “multitude” who were in the country outside Jerusalem. According to the next verse, however, not all of the latter class were taken to Babylon.

12. The poor. See 2 Kings 24:14; Jer. 39:10; 40:7; 52:16. Only a remnant of the poor were left in the country, and lands were given to them for cultivation. It was hoped that they might prove to be a nucleus of Jews loyal to Babylon.

13. The pillars of brass. The more valuable treasures of the Temple had previously been taken to Babylon (Dan. 1:2; 2 Chron. 36:7; 2 Kings 24:13; 2 Chron. 36:10; Jer. 28:3). But there still remained some of the massive works of bronze made by Hiram for Solomon's Temple, such as the two pillars set up at the entrance to the Temple (1 Kings 7:15–21), the brazen sea (1 Kings 7:23–26), and the bases of brass (1 Kings 7:27, 28).

14. The pots. See 1 Kings 7:45.

15. Of gold. Nebuchadnezzar's attacks on Jerusalem in the reigns of Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin had left a number of items of value in both the Temple and the palace (Jer. 27:18–22), but these were now carried away.

17. The height. A fuller account of these pillars is given in 1 Kings 7:15–21; 2 Chron. 3:15–17; Jer. 52:21–23.

18. The captain. Nebuzaradan (vs. 8, 11, 20). He seems to have been a man of character and sound judgment (Jer. 40:2–5). The captain selected a number of individuals for exemplary punishment.

Seraiah. The father of Jehozadak, who was carried into captivity (1 Chron. 6:14, 15), and an ancestor of Ezra (Ezra 7:1).

Zephaniah. A priest of high rank, probably the high priest's deputy (see Jer. 21:1; 29:25, 29; 37:3).

19. An officer. Likely the royal officer commanding the garrison.

In a Babylonian court almanac of the year 570 B.C. that names the chief officers of the realm, Nebuzaradan appears as *Nabu-zêri-iddinam*. His archaic title, "chief baker," equivalent to the Hebrew term "chief butcher," designates him as "lord chancellor."

Five men. Evidently royal counselors, and as such in a large measure responsible for the policy that brought the nation to its present plight.

The principal scribe. An important officer of the general staff.

Threescore men. Probably men who had distinguished themselves as ringleaders of the rebellion.

21. Carried away. The carrying away into Babylon did not take place in a single year. As early as 605 B.C., the third year of Jehoiakim, a number of Hebrews were taken captive (Dan. 1:1–7). Other captivities took place in 598, the 7th year of Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 52:28); in 597, the 8th year of Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24:12–16); in 587, the 18th year of Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 52:29); in 586, the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar, the great captivity (2 Kings 25:8–11; Jer. 52:12, 15); and again in 582, the 23d year of Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 52:30).

22. The people. See Jer. 40 to 44 for a fuller account. As a wise administrator, Nebuchadnezzar gave careful consideration to the people that remained, and made proper arrangements for them.

Gedaliah. Nebuchadnezzar diplomatically appointed a Jew to be ruler of the land under the Babylonian administration. Gedaliah came from a family of high rank. His father, Ahikam, had been a trusted official under Josiah (ch. 22:12), and had sufficient influence with Jehoiakim to have Jeremiah spared from death (Jer. 26:24). Gedaliah evidently supported the same policy of moderation as Jeremiah. A seal impression reading, "Belonging to Gedaliahu, who is over the house," has been discovered at Lachish. See Jer. 40:9.

23. All the captains. Many of these men had fled with the king and had dispersed themselves over the country (vs. 4, 5). Now they came out of hiding and made their way to Gedaliah (Jer. 40:7, 8).

Mizpah. A city of Benjamin, near Ramah (Joshua 18:25, 26; 1 Kings 15:22). The exact site is unknown, some locating it about 5 mi. (8 km.) northwest of Jerusalem (as in the map of Palestine during the Period of the Judges), others 7 1/2 mi. (12 km.) north. The latter identification, at *Tell en-Naşbeh*, is employed in this commentary and in the maps drawn for it. This site is assigned to Ataroth on the map of Palestine In Biblical Times. The tribes were summoned here at times for conferences during the later period of the judges (Judges 20:1–3; 21:1, 5, 8). Here Samuel gathered the tribes and here he judged Israel (1 Sam. 7:5–17). Here also Saul was chosen king (1 Sam. 10:17–25). Asa fortified the site as a defense against the northern tribes (1 Kings 15:22; 2 Chron. 16:6).

With such a background, and so near Jerusalem, Mizpah would make a suitable headquarters of the new administration.

Ishmael. The grandson of Elishama (v. 25), the royal secretary (Jer. 36:12, 20), and of royal blood (2 Kings 25:25; Jer. 36:12; Jer. 41:1). His royal birth probably explains his attitude toward Gedaliah.

Johanan. See Jer. 40:8. Johanan later warned Gedaliah of Ishmael's intended treachery and himself offered to slay Ishmael, but was not permitted to do so by Gedaliah (Jer. 40:13–16). Later Johanan turned against Ishmael and became leader of a group of Jews who fled to Egypt, forcing Jeremiah to accompany them (Jer. 41:14, 15; 42:1, 2; 43:2–7).

The Netophathite. Netophah, southeast of Bethlehem, is now *Khirbet Bedd Fālūh* (Ezra 2:21–23; Neh. 7:26, 27).

Jaazaniah. A seal of Jaazaniah, reading, “Belonging to Jaazaniahu, servant of the king,” has been found at *Tell en-Naṣbeh*.

24. Serve the king. Fugitives had fled to the neighboring countries of Moab, Ammon, and Edom (see Jer. 40:11), and doubtless were still holding out defiantly against Babylon. Gedaliah now pledged them immunity if they would accept the Chaldeans as their masters. He invited them to return and settle down, to partake of the fruits of the land (Jer. 40:9–12).

25. The seventh month. Perhaps two months after the destruction of Jerusalem (vs. 8–12), possibly a year later (cf. PK 460).

Smote Gedaliah. Ishmael had been hired by Baalis the king of Ammon to murder Gedaliah (Jer. 40:14). The assassination might have been averted if Gedaliah had been more alert and had given heed to the warning brought him by Johanan (Jer. 40:13–16). Gedaliah was treacherously slain after he had entertained Ishmael and his men at a friendly meal (Jer. 41:1–3).

26. Came to Egypt. For further details see Jer. 41 to 43. Jeremiah counseled strongly against the flight to Egypt, but to no avail. Johanan, it seems, turned against Ishmael, forcing him to flee to Ammon (Jer. 41:15), and with Jaazaniah assumed the leadership of a group of Jews who fled to Egypt, compelling Jeremiah to accompany them.

27. Seven and thirtieth year. See p. 161.

The twelfth month. The end of the Babylonian year, in the spring, just before the new-year festivities, would be a suitable time for the release of political prisoners.

Evil-merodach. Called Amel-Marduk in secular history. He was the son and successor of Nebuchadnezzar, and came to the throne early in October, 562 B.C., and reigned till August, 560 B.C.

The year that he began to reign. Literally, “in the year when he was [or became] king.” On the interpretation of this clause, see p. 161.

Lift up the head. That is, Evil-merodach released Jehoiachin from prison (cf. Gen. 40:13, 20).

28. Above the throne. He gave him precedence over other captive kings who were also in Babylon.

29. Did eat bread. That is, he received his support from the royal purse, as was the case with the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of the groves who ate “at Jezebel's table” (1 Kings 18:19).

30. *Continual allowance.* Several cuneiform tablets of 592 B.C., listing payments of rations of oil, barley, etc., to captives and skilled workmen in and around Babylon, include the name of Yaukin (Jehoiachin), king of Judah, and five of his sons. This shows he was still at liberty in 592 B.C. For some unknown reason he was later imprisoned, where he remained until Evil-merodach freed him. From that time on till his death Jehoiachin once more received his support from the royal purse, living in peace and comfort in the land of his captivity. The writer of Kings closes his book with a picture of a former king of Judah, after a long and wearisome captivity, closing his life in comparative comfort and honor. Under extreme affliction, the seed of David was at least not wholly cast off.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–26PK 452–463

1 PK 452

4, 5 PK 458

7, 18–20PK 459

22, 25, 26 PK 460

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⁹Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (2 Ki 24:13). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.